Fukuyama's New Big Idea ALAN WOLFE

THE NEW REPUBLIC

Why The New York Times Doesn't Get Culture
LEE SIEGEL

Iran Erupts
THE EDITORS

August 2, 1999

Selling Shyness

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By MICHELLE COTTLE

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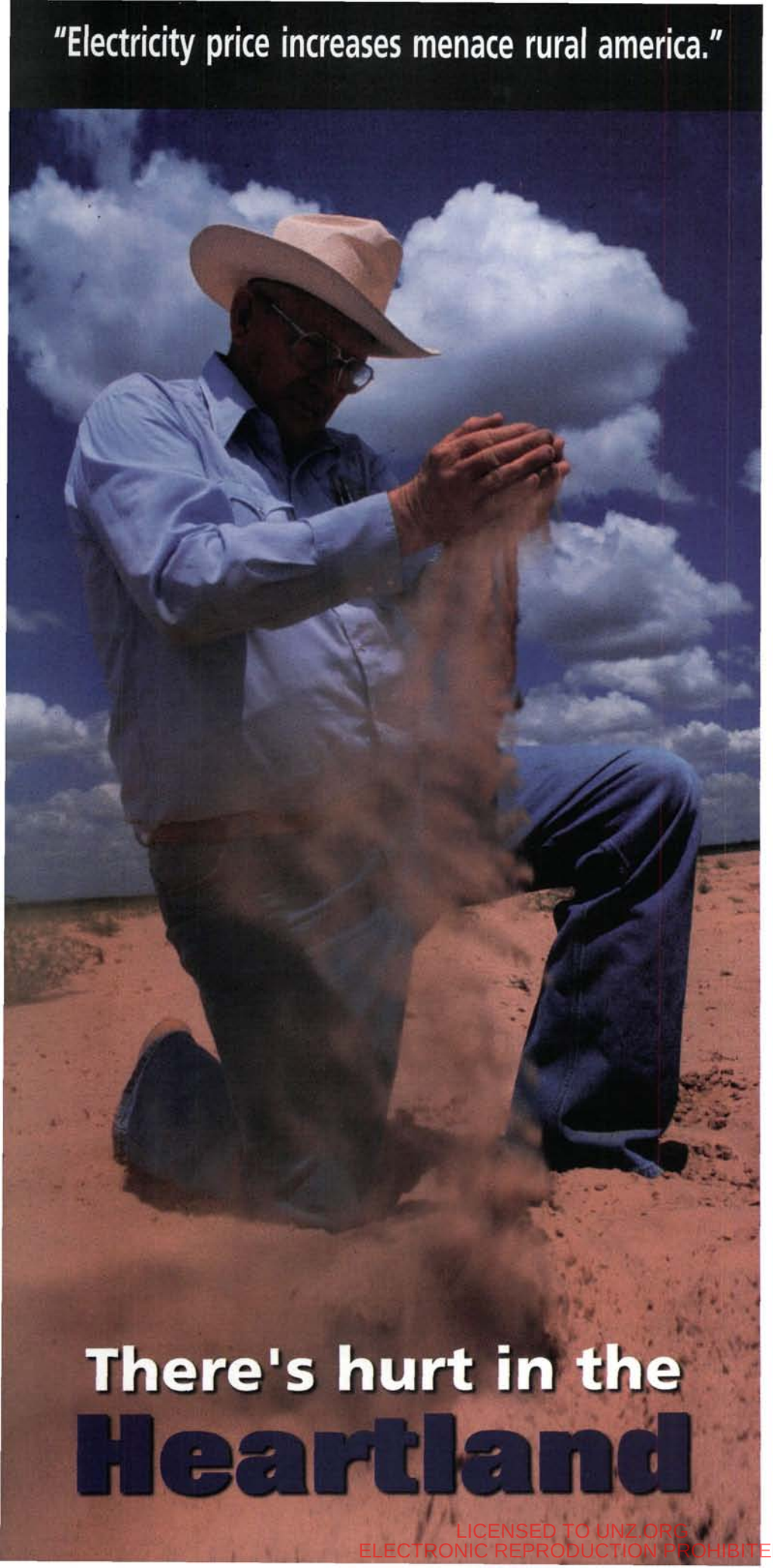

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A Journal of Politics and the Arts

WASHINGTON, D.C.
AUGUST 2, 1999
ISSUE 4,411

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On the Cover : Illustration by ROBERT NEUBECKER
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THE NEW REPUBLIC, Vol. 221, Number 5, Issue 4,411, August 2, 1999. (Printed in the U.S. on July 14, 1999.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated Jan. 4 & 11, April 26 & May 3, July 19 & 26, and Sept. 13 & 20, 1999) at 1220 19th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone (202) 331-7494. For advertising inquiries, please contact Ann Rossaki at (202) 331-7494 or Marti Meyerson Hooper in our NY sales office at (212) 925-5790. Yearly subscriptions, $59.94; foreign, $99.94 (U.S. funds); Canada, $79.94 (U.S. funds). Back issues, $4.00 (includes postage & handling). **© 1999 by The New Republic, Inc.** **(ISSN 0028-6583). Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Rights and permissions: fax (202) 331-0275. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. Microform, Canadian Periodical Index, CD-ROM, issue and article copies are available through University Microfilms Intnl., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Telephone 1-800-521-0600. Postmaster: send change of address to The New Republic, P.O. Box 37298, Boone, IA 50037-0298. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope (Internet mail address: tnr@aol.com). For subscription inquiries or problems call 1-800-827-1289 or visit our website at www.thenewrepublic.com.**

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Getting the
good$

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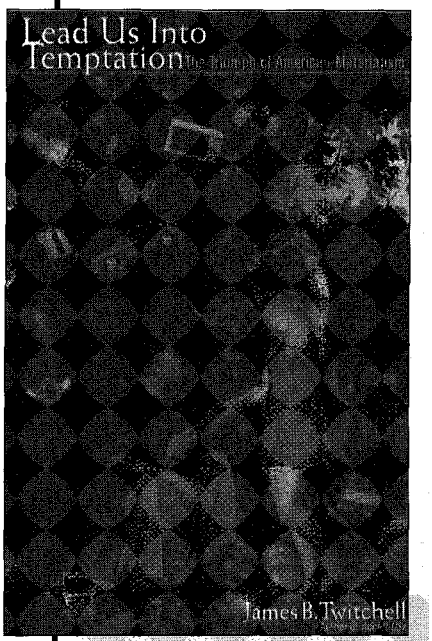

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CORRESPONDENCE

Wilsonian Republicans

TO THE EDITORS:

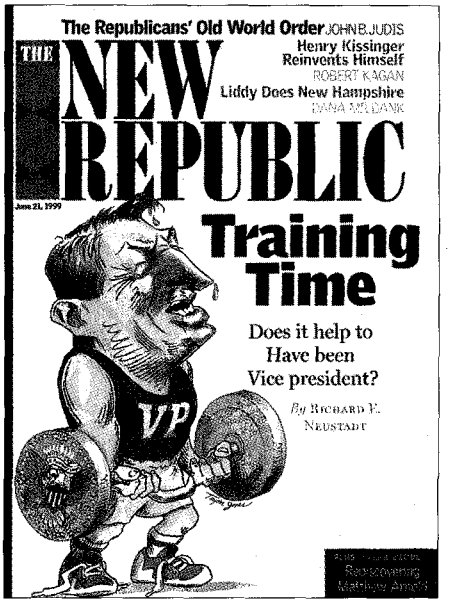
John B. Judis's "Beyond National Interest" (June 21) cites us as exemplars of a new conservative isolationism supposedly being spearheaded by the Republican leadership in Congress. It makes us wonder just what U.S. foreign policy he's been looking at.

During the 1990s, after all, the United States has supported peacekeeping or combat operations in places such as Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Rwanda, and Kosovo—places that have never explicitly made it onto any official list of even significant (much less vital) national foreign policy interests. Literally tens of billions of dollars have been spent on such operations, and, given the open-endedness of many of these commitments, that figure is certain to grow. In the Balkan cases, moreover, U.S. actions have seriously strained relations with far more important powers—namely, Russia and China. Meanwhile, America's major alliance—NATO—is expanding geographically and functionally.

Economically, the nation has guaranteed tens of billions of taxpayer dollars for the IMF-supervised bailouts of corrupt or incompetent foreign governments around the world. Most of these policies have been implemented while Congress has been controlled by the Republicans that Judis brands as the heirs of the interwar isolationists. Indeed, from Newt Gingrich to Dennis Hastert to Tom DeLay to Trent Lott, the Republican leadership in both houses voted for most of these Wilsonian policies (although sometimes carping about specifics)—and brought along much of the rank and file.

Even Judis's premise—that the concept of national interest is "almost always" used to promote unduly narrow and selfish foreign policies—is wrong. Nothing has been more characteristic of post-cold-war U.S. foreign policy than ringing declarations that even the smallest, most obscure international humanitarian programs resoundingly and concretely benefit the American public.

This rhetoric exemplifies a major fallacy underlying Judis's entire article, along with Clinton's foreign policy and Wilsonianism generally: that drawing up a laundry list of intrinsically desirable goals, such as Judis's "creat[ing] a just and benevolent world," is the same as charting a viable foreign policy. Like Wilsonians inside and outside government today, Judis says nothing about keeping America's foreign policy ends and means in



line, about setting priorities, about handling trade-offs among objectives, about whether international conditions are even conducive to such ambitions in the first place, or about fallback strategies in the event that good intentions fall short or backfire.

These omissions indicate that the top priority of Judis and other Wilsonians is not realistically enhancing American security or prosperity (which he revealingly scoffs at as obsessing about "bomb shelters and bank balances"). Instead, the Wilsonians' main concern is dreaming up endless ways to risk the nation's blood and treasure on their own, ultimately personal agendas.

ALAN TONELSON
USBIC Educational Foundation
Washington, D.C.

TED GALEN CARPENTER
Cato Institute
Washington, D.C.

Bibi's secret deal

TO THE EDITORS:

As one who had firsthand experience with Benjamin Netanyahu's contacts with Syria and who, as Cabinet secretary, personally took part in these proceedings, I wish to correct several points made by Daniel Pipes ("The Road to Damascus," July 5).

Contrary to the assertion in the article, Prime Minister Netanyahu never agreed to an Israeli withdrawal to the June 4, 1967, lines. No agreement was reached between Jerusalem and Damascus, first and foremost because Netanyahu refused to present the Syrians with a map that would indicate an Israeli withdrawal to

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the 1967 lines. Furthermore, no timetable was established for an Israeli withdrawal in the Golan Heights, if an agreement is reached.

On the subject of demilitarized zones and zones with limitations on forces and weapons, some progress was made, but here, too, no final arrangement was reached. Contrary to another assertion in the article, there was no Israeli consent to a demilitarized zone of only ten kilometers in width. In fact, Netanyahu insisted on much wider demilitarized zones and wider zones with limitations on forces and weapons. In light of the prime minister's rejection of the 1967 lines, the Syrians declined to present a map outlining their demilitarized zones and zones with limitations on forces and weapons.

On the matter of early warning stations, real progress was made. Contrary to their previous position, the Syrians showed a willingness to refrain from the immediate demolition of the early warning stations, primarily of the Hermon station. They agreed that the stations would be operated by American and French international forces, and they gave their tacit consent to an Israeli team that would operate the installations under an American aegis.

It was Netanyahu's refusal to accept the Syrian diktat to withdraw to the 1967 lines, as well as the Syrian refusal to delineate satisfactory demilitarized and force separation zones, that prevented an Israel-Syria agreement.

DAN NAVEH
Jerusalem, Israel

DANIEL PIPES REPLIES:
First, Dan Naveh disputes only a few details in my article—by implication confirming my general account of the Lauder-Nader shuttle diplomacy (including the fact of his being one of the twelve individuals directly involved).

Second, Naveh's argument (that no agreement was reached because Netanyahu stood firmly by his principles) reiterates what I portrayed as one side of the debate, down to the specifics about the map, the timetable, and so on. Ultimately, though, I found the other side more persuasive—the one that says Benjamin Netanyahu capitulated on nearly every issue but was prevented from signing when his defense minister, Yitzhak Mordechai, and his foreign minister, Ariel Sharon, refused to endorse his terms.

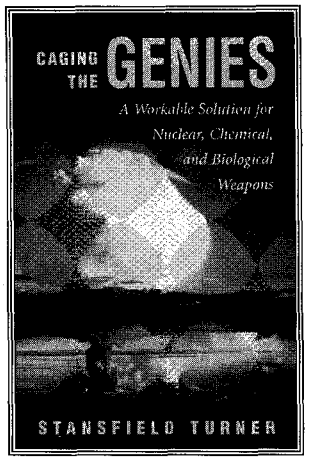
Third, how does anyone outside the circle of twelve participants make up his mind which side to believe? It boils down to one's assessment of Netanyahu. Naveh and those who defend the former prime minister present him as a man of

continued on page 49

CAGING THE GENIES

A Workable Solution for Nuclear, Chemical, and Biological Weapons

STANSFIELD TURNER



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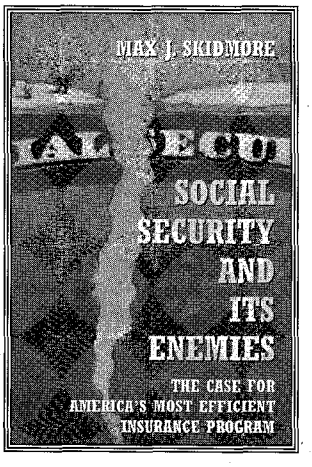

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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

Be Patient

BY THE TIME you read this, the Senate will have finished debating the patients' bill of rights, and one of four things will have happened. The Senate will have approved the Democrats' version, which would tighten regulations and give patients the right to sue managed care companies if they feel they have suffered damages from being denied care. It will have passed the Republicans' considerably less stringent alternative. It will have fashioned some compromise measure. Or it will have passed no legislation at all, leaving the issue to be hashed out in 30-second attack ads during the 2000 elections.

Most pundits are predicting the last outcome, and they're probably right. The debate is more political theater than serious reform effort. But despite—or perhaps because of—its artificiality, the patients' bill of rights debate illustrates much of what is wrong with the way Americans think and talk about the difficult trade-offs involved in trying to give everyone excellent medical care without bankrupting the country.

Supported by a coalition so broad it actually encompasses both the doctors and their usual nemeses, the trial lawyers, Democrats insist that their bill, the centerpiece of which is the provision permitting patients to sue their insurance companies in state court for wrongful death or personal injury, would impose much-needed accountability on the faceless bureaucrats of managed care—all at a minimal cost to patients (the cost of "a Big Mac a month," as Senator Edward Kennedy put it). Republicans, backed by the insurance industry and employers' groups, have said that the huge additional costs of coping with the threat of potential lawsuits would force insurance companies to raise premiums, which, in turn, would force millions more into the swollen ranks of the uninsured.

In fact, both sides speak some truth. The patients' bill of rights, like any other government regulation, would produce some measure of protection for the public and some measure of higher costs for business. Those costs would be passed along in the form of higher prices, reduced supply, or some combination of both. What no one can say for sure is how large the costs of increased HMO regulation would be—and who would bear them. Nor can anyone quantify the benefits or say how they'd be distributed. Both sides have bandied about Congressional Budget Office cost estimates to bolster their arguments. But the CBO itself acknowledges that "because of the extent and complexity of the changes to the health insurance system that could result from such provisions, estimates of their effects are subject to more than the usual amount of uncertainty." What's the usual amount of uncertainty? Check the CBO's latest budget surplus numbers.

I also didn't entirely trust either side's spin on exactly what it is that managed care companies typically do. In the insurance industry's version of events, managed care functions as a watchdog against useless and ineffective medical procedures, thus preserving resources and quality care for all the insured. Insurance lobbyist Karen Ignagni claimed on "The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer" that managed care has replaced an "old system that had too much of unnecessary procedures and things that were dangerous for patients. We've changed that. We've improved health care." Now doctors may have had a tendency to overuse their expensive sonogram machines or to overprescribe antibiotics for patients complaining of sniffles. But, as a general proposition, Ignagni's picture of an "old system" rife with "dangerous" practices is patently ludicrous.

Advocates of the patients' bill of rights, though, make it sound as if children die of septic shock every day because some idiot at the other end of an HMO's 800 number maliciously denies coverage for a necessary test. This is policy-making by horror story. Surveys show that most people are generally satisfied with the health care they personally receive.

For what it's worth, I've got a managed-care-nightmare anecdote of my own—one that, I guess, may illustrate a more common pattern of patient frustration. I recently went to see my doctor about some severe shoulder and neck pain (probably exacerbated by too much time spent typing in front of a computer screen). He referred me to a physical therapist, who discovered all sorts of related problems and gave me something like two dozen sessions at $150 a pop—without either of us realizing that we didn't have all the necessary preapprovals that my insurance company would require for reimbursement. To cut a long story short, despite lots of phone calls to the insurer demanding an explanation, and despite my doctor's sending a letter insisting that my treatment was, indeed, medically necessary, managed care said "no." Steamed at the bureaucrats but resigned to my fate, I ended up paying a tab far too large to mention in a family publication.

Now, whose fault was this? The doctor's, for not getting the paperwork in order? The physical therapist's, for not warning me to double-check with the insurance company before pressing on with so many sessions? Mine, for being a passive patient? Or the managed care company's, for being comprised of a bunch of cheapskates who could care less about my aching back? The answer is probably all of the above. But I also wonder how a right to sue would have helped me or anyone else in a costly, bothersome, but non-life-threatening situation such as this. I definitely feel I got screwed, but it's not worth it to find out whether either an outside reviewer or a jury wouldn't concur with the insurance company. After all, the question of whether all those soothing but transient massages and ice packs were really "medically necessary" is a pretty subjective one. Indeed, the exploding cost of physical therapy, frequently prescribed by doctors who themselves own an interest in the physical therapy provider (mine didn't), has made P.T. a prime target of managed care's cost-cutters. (Note that the list of groups supporting the Democratic version of the patients' bill of rights includes the American Physical Therapy Association.)

As a society, we're not good at dealing with unpleasant realities such as the fact that there are only so many resources and that, therefore, at the margins, there is always someone getting less medical treatment than he or she would have received in an ideal world of unlimited resources. Our national denial of this is perhaps best demonstrated by the fact that, even as President Clinton was denouncing the evils of managed care, he was pushing a new Medicare plan that would control expanding Medicare costs by giving managed care a greater role in allocating medical care to the elderly.

We want it all. As arbiters of the close calls, for-profit managed care firms are less than optimal because they have every incentive to favor cost control. But, at some point, under any imaginable system of health insurance—public, private, or in-between—someone will still have to decide where to draw the line. And those decisions will inevitably reflect not only some supposedly objective criteria of "medical necessity" but also some measure of bias, self-interest, or bureaucratic inertia. A more responsible health care debate would begin by acknowledging that society can, at best, minimize the impact of those tough choices, but it can never eliminate the need for them.

CHARLES LANE

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Where We Stand

A commentary on public education and other critical issues

Snoop!

By SANDRA FELDMAN, President
American Federation of Teachers

I'm a city girl, through and through. The only guns I saw growing up were on a policeman's hip or in the movies.

But after I became president of the teachers' union in New York City, I was introduced the hard way: One of our members, Audrey Chasen, was shot in a drug-gang crossfire while driving between a district-office workshop and her school. In those terrible years of gun violence during the late 1980s and early 1990s, another teacher, hurrying to save her students from wild gunfire, got shot in the leg as she pushed the last second grader from the playground into the school.

During that same period of urban drug violence, a high school student killed one student and shot another just as the school was getting ready for a visit from the mayor. It seemed that illegal guns were everywhere—and teenagers had too many of them.

Real Consequences

The Board of Education, the PTA, and the teachers' union mobilized. After a lot of debate, metal detectors were installed in a number of schools. And both state and federal laws were tightened. Students who came to school carrying guns found they faced real consequences: exclusion from school for an entire year.

Awakened cruelly to the previously unimaginable, adults began paying more attention. And the crack cocaine wars started winding down.

There are still neighborhoods where violence erupts, but the time when kids regularly brought guns to school is long gone in New York, and in most other cities. And even though the horrific suburban gun sprees that have taken place over the past year bring back those dark days in our cities, there are some striking differences.

The boys involved in these recent incidents, besides being seriously troubled, grew up in a culture where adults have a positive attitude toward guns, and the access to guns of all kinds is nearly unfettered.

Like city kids, middle American youngsters are exposed relentlessly to violence on television, in movies, and through video games. Youngsters who are emotionally healthy won't resort to killing. But teenagers are volatile; they get into fights. They brood and bear grudges. Although most of them are decent, respectful kids, they are kids. They need adult guidance and supervision. They need us to nose around in their lives.

Being nosy tells our kids we care about them and what they're up to.

A reporter who was in Denver after the Columbine incident told me that many parents were unsure about how much to "intrude" into their teenagers' lives. They felt as though they were snooping. She asked me what I thought, and I said, "Snoop!"

There are protective measures that we need to take as a society:

- **Pass state and federal gun control laws that do a better job of restricting children's access to guns.** Mandatory child safety locks on all guns would be a good start. So would stricter laws for licensing and monitoring those who sell guns. The Senate made a useful beginning, only to have it totally undercut by the House—so we still have a long way to go.
- **Bring more counselors into schools, especially for kids in those hormone-heavy adolescent years.** One counselor for 400 or 500 students—the most we are likely to see in schools today—cannot keep tabs on troubled kids and make sure they get the help they need.
- **Explore further ways to discourage the marketing of products that glorify violence to kids**—that goes for the music industry, Hollywood, TV, and video game makers.

But neither these things nor other necessary school-safety measures are enough, and I say, loudly, to parents and grandparents and aunts and uncles and other adults who have relationships with children, "Snoop!"

Pay attention to the kids. They need it. They need to know what is acceptable behavior and what isn't. They need to know that rules count, and that there are (fair) consequences for breaking them. That's how they know you care. Believe me, teenagers will find enough ways to keep secrets from you. But the nosier you are, the more they'll know what to do and what not to do.

Parents have a tough job these days. They need the support of schools, communities, laws, and all the institutions that set the moral tone for society. If we all pitch in, we can help make sure that these adolescent years of passage—which can be so difficult—are safe and secure for everybody's children. ▮

Where We Stand **is published once every month in *The New Republic*. To comment, write to Sandra Feldman, AFT, 555 New Jersey Ave. N.W., Washington, DC 20001.** **© Sandra Feldman 1999.** **Visit our web site (http://www.aft.org).**

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CAMPAIGN JOURNAL

Overboard

AMHERST, New Hampshire

IT'S INDEPENDENCE DAY in New Hampshire, a week before home-state Senator Bob Smith is to quit the Republican Party to run for president as an independent. But the man has already abandoned ship. Literally.

Smith had been planning to march in Amherst's Fourth of July parade, using a nautical theme. His campaign has rented a boat on a trailer to serve as a float. His supporters have donned sailor caps and T-shirts printed with captain's wheels and Smith's campaign theme: "Chart the Right Course for America." In fact, the only thing missing is the skipper himself. Smith has decided not to march, after all.

His followers aren't sure what changed his mind, but my guess is that the answer can be found in one word—nay, one initial. W., the $36 million man, has decided to march, and he immediately attracts a throng numbering more than 100: a squad of cheerleaders, a clown on stilts, a man with a remote-controlled skunk, and a woman with a sign reading: "WE WANT MAGNETS ON YOUR BODY WHEN YOU ARE IN THE WHITE HOUSE." A calliope on wheels plays carnival music. Bush aides hand out Bush baseball cards ("Position: Governor of 2nd Largest State," they read and tout, "Reduced welfare rolls by more than 335,000," as if that were a slugging percentage.) Reporters chase Bush with microphones on long poles, like so many drum majors with batons.

Had Smith come, he would have been forgotten, much as Gary Bauer now finds himself as he watches the Bush scrum. A small gang of Bauer volunteers is trying to stir up enthusiasm for their man. One young woman holds a sign saying, "*YO QUIERO* BAUER"—for all those Spanish-speaking New Hampshire residents. Another Bauer sign proclaims, "BAUER? YEAH, BABY." (It's unclear how the refrain of the sex-crazed Austin Powers will help the torchbearer of the religious right.) Bauer and his minions, squeezed between Bush and a procession of local realtors marching with briefcases, can't even persuade some spectators to shake the candidate's hand and take his leaflets. "Who's this Bauer guy?" one woman asks. "Is he a Democrat?" another confused spectator inquires. "Who's *that*?" a girl asks her mother. "Daddy just told me who he is," the mother replies, "and he's not somebody we would ever vote for."

BUT, IF THE PARADE IS ANOTHER coronation event for Bush, the scene is entirely different a few hours later in Hopkinton. Here, at a picnic held by an antitax group, Smith, Bauer, and Pat Buchanan are the stars—and it's Bush who has stayed away. The 1,200 attendees, many wearing pro-life stickers and one displaying plastic fetuses, fill the place with boos whenever Bush's name and his $36 million war chest are mentioned. "Let me say to that guy, George, with all his money: you're not going to win," Smith bellows. Bauer declares: "We don't have kings here." And Buchanan, amid chants of "Go third party," shouts: "We're not into coronations up here." When the attendees cast their votes in a straw poll, Buchanan gets 58 percent to Bauer's 21 percent and Smith's nine percent. Bush's support? One percent.

Conservatives never loved Bush nor, for that matter, his father. But his record level of fund-raising—an astonishing $36 million in the first six months of the year—seems to have galvanized the right in opposition to him. Smith, on July 13, quit the GOP. Buchanan has flirted with a Reform Party run, and Bauer has made hostile noises. True, conservatives are famous for empty threats about third parties. But Richard Lessner, the former editorial voice of the *Manchester Union Leader*, tells me over a plate of beans and sausage in Hopkinton that he sees a "critical mass" of frustration. "The Bush phenomenon has really rocked the Republican right," Lessner says. "He's going to win without a single vote being cast." Most galling is the $480 average contribution to Bush—not exactly from Mom and Pop. "People here feel he's another guy bought and paid for by Goldman Sachs."

A SPLIT IN THE REPUBLICAN PARTY would, under normal circumstances, hand the election to the Democrats. But these are not normal circumstances. The Gore campaign is in full meltdown mode. The latest is that Gore, tossing his anti-tobacco principles, hired ad man Carter Eskew, the mastermind of the tobacco industry's fight against the administration's anti-tobacco legislation. Not only does this damage Gore's ability to use tobacco as an issue, but it has injected further turmoil into the fractious Gore camp; Gore's existing ad man, Bob Squier, was Eskew's mentor—before they had a bitter falling-out. After Eskew came aboard the Gore campaign, Squier shared his hurt feelings on the front page of *The New York Times*.

The worst, however, may be yet to come. Gore's chief of staff, Ron Klain, is so serious about quitting that he's been talking about jobs with a couple of Washington law firms. Gore is said to be working on Klain to stay, as he should. Klain is as smart and as decent a man as there is in politics, and Gore can't afford to pack his roster with people like Eskew while losing people like Klain. And, while Gore continues to inflict damage upon himself, Bill Bradley has finally begun to fill in some of his Big Ideas. He upstaged the timid Gore campaign with a strong anti-handgun proposal (large portions of which Gore copied in his own proposal on July 12), and, on July 22, Bradley will stand before the National Press Club to outdo the vice president with a specific proposal for campaign finance reform. Whether or not Bradley can beat Gore—and that still seems unlikely—a contested race might not leave either with enough money to compete against the $36 million man next spring.

THOSE OF US WHO DON'T CARRY around plastic fetuses should be encouraged by the right's loathing of Bush. If he's making those kinds of enemies, he's probably a sensible fellow. Still, the conservatives are right that there's something obscene about his $36 million take. Gore would have been able to make an issue of it were it not for his own fund-raising controversies from 1996. Absurdly, the greatest voice now for the little guy is Steve Forbes, who will spend his personal millions to make sure the Republican primary is competitive.

Of course, there's still John McCain, champion of campaign finance reform. McCain sent supporters an editorial about Bush from the Littleton, New Hampshire, *Courier*. "It appears once again that money can buy everything," the editors opined. "Money can buy public office, money can buy public policy, money can buy the public interest and all but disenfranchise those who don't have it." The *Courier*'s solution: "Imagine a presidential race between McCain and former Senator Bill Bradley."

That's quite a fantasy. But why stop there? Imagine a McCain-Bradley debate interrupted by the arrival of a large boat on a flatbed truck. On the deck of the boat stands a six-foot-six, pear-shaped figure, a pirate hat concealing his comb-over, a dagger in one hand, a hook on the other, and a black patch over his eye. "Ladies and gentlemen," the moderator intones, "the nominee of the U.S. Taxpayers Party, former Republican Bob Smith."

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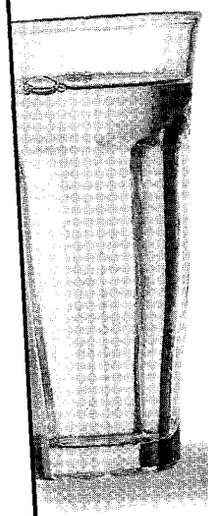

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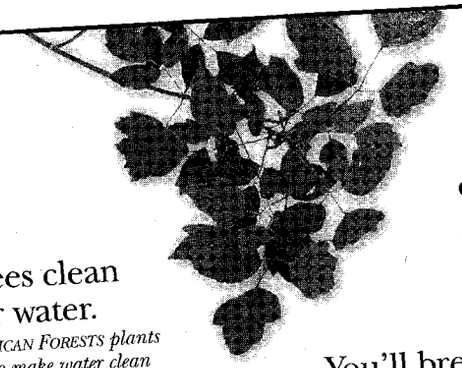

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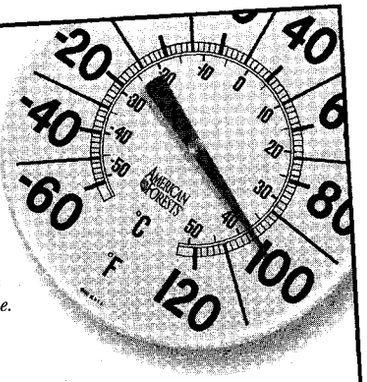

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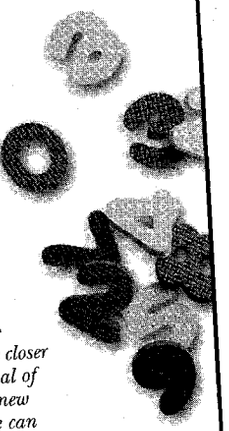

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Street Fight

AS THEY DID two decades ago, when Iranian students helped to overthrow the Shah and install a radical Islamic government, the streets of Tehran have erupted in chaos. Only this time, the student demonstrators want real democracy—which means they want more freedom to say and do as they please. Yet that kind of freedom is the one thing an Islamic theocracy can never provide.

Next door in Iraq, things don't look so good for Saddam Hussein, either. Since May, Saddam's Republican Guard units and secret police have been the targets of numerous bombings and assassination attempts, many carried out by shadowy new domestic opposition groups with names like the Secret Organization of Iraqi Army Officers-General Command or Iraqi Vanguards for National Salvation. Saddam has been so rattled by the domestic opposition that, in mid-June, he met with senior Baath Party and security officials in Basra to tell them to "spare no effort in thwarting the plans of our enemies" and to "confront the influence of hostile information."

The Clinton administration—which, from Haiti to North Korea to Kosovo, has proclaimed victory where others see ambiguous results—has been noticeably reticent about Iran and Iraq. Yet the increasing domestic opposition in both countries is at least partly the fruit of the Clinton administration's commitment, however it may have vacillated on occasion, to "dual containment" in the Persian Gulf.

Although the ultimate catalyst for the student demonstrations in Iran was a murderous July 8 attack on Tehran University dormitories by police-supported hard-line Ansar-e Hezbollah thugs, the unrest has been building for some time. Most of it stems from Iran's faltering economy, which has been hurt by low oil prices and continuing U.S. pressure against foreign investment. Each year 800,000 students graduate into the job market, but annual job growth in Iran is only 350,000.

Not surprisingly, a focus of the student protests has been the reformist Iranian President Mohammad Khatami. Students chant "Khatami, where are you?" because they want and expect Khatami to intervene on their side. But, aside from small concessions to the students, Khatami has hesitated. His insistence on sticking to rules designed to preserve the power of the most hard-line Islamists augurs poorly for reform. Calming down the students without inflaming hard-liners will test Khatami's plan for slow change. He may very well turn out to be the Ayatollah Gorbachev: the changes he initiated were too small to modernize the old system peacefully but were just large enough to set in motion social forces he cannot control.

The Clinton administration, under considerable pressure from Congress, has abandoned its early enthusiasm (mostly voiced by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright) for more contact with Khatami's government. But now may be the time to push Iran for more U.S. contact with the Iranian people. That means loudly and frequently proclaiming that the United States wishes to see Iranians traveling to the United States—travel impeded mostly by the Islamic Republic's refusal to allow a U.S. visa office or any other official U.S. representation in Tehran (although the number of Iranians wanting to travel to the United States far exceeds the number of visas the U.S. grants, and, for whatever reason, some Iranian artists and filmmakers have had particular difficulty getting in). To get across the point that the Islamic Republic restricts people-to-people dialogue, grand gestures are called for, not minor adjustments designed to be acceptable to those in Tehran who are scared of contact with America and Americans.

Opening up to the Iranian people should be combined with tightening the screws on the mullahs' government. In the two years since Khatami became president, Iran's ballistic missile program has continued unabated. In 1998, Iran tested a missile capable of striking Tel Aviv, and it is now working on a multistage missile. Some associated with last year's Rumsfeld Commission suggest Iran may have an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) capable of hitting America within five years. And no one believes these long-range missiles are for carrying a few hundred pounds of TNT. ICBMs are for nuclear warheads or, at least, biological weapons. Good strategic sense requires deterring this threat through strong actions against those who aid Iran's missile program—meaning the Russian scientists in Tehran whom Moscow could force back home if it cared enough to act.

In Iraq, the United States has even more leverage. Not the least of Saddam's current troubles is the ongoing U.S. bombing campaign, which has hit Iraq more than 60 times this year. While theoretically a defensive reaction to Iraqi challenges to the no-fly zones in the north and south, in practice the U.S. bombing has clobbered Iraq's communications, command, and control networks. The bombing loosens Saddam's

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grip on his regional commanders and diverts him from his obsessive search-and-destroy operations against dissent.

The United States is also helping Saddam's external opposition coalesce. In April, the Iraqi National Congress (INC) was able to convene its first Executive Council meeting in three years. May brought a visit to Washington by not only the INC—including its two Kurdish groups—but also such prominent Sunni oppositionists as former Foreign Minister Adnan Pacachi and the monarchists under Sharif Ali bin al-Hussein, claimant to the throne. The opposition has decided to revive the National Assembly, hoping it can meet soon in Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq, where it held its last (and only) meeting in 1992.

Saddam may be weaker than at any time since 1992. The full effort of the U.S. government should be behind the goal of regime change. Specifically, that means taking at least three actions. First, enforce the southern no-drive zone. U.N. Security Council Resolution 949 authorizes force if Iraq "takes any . . . action to enhance its military capacity in southern Iraq," yet America rarely hits tanks or other heavy weapons Saddam brings into the south to attack opposition forces there. Second, clarify Clinton's December 1998 pledge that we "remain ready to use [force] if Saddam . . . moves against the Kurds." Saddam should be told that means no massing troops or provoking terror to prevent the INC National Assembly from meeting in the Kurdish north. And, third, accelerate deliveries of aid to the INC under the Iraq Liberation Act, by which Congress, in October 1998, authorized providing the opposition $97 million in excess military items.

Time is on the side of the U.S. in both Iran and Iraq. These regimes are rejected by their peoples; the Clinton administration has done much to weaken them. Now is the time for an accelerated effort to support the forces of change. ■

NOTEBOOK

AMBIGUOUS GEORGE: There's little doubt that much of George W. Bush's current popularity stems from the fact that, so far at least, he's managed to be all things to all people. Consider the coverage of the Republican front-runner's recent swing through California. A big question facing Bush on the trip was: What would he say about Proposition 209, the anti-affirmative action initiative that California voters approved in 1996? "I support the spirit of no quotas and no preferences," Bush said at one point. "But it's important to say it's not what you're against but what you're for. In our state, I'm for increasing the pool of applicants, opening the door so that more people are eligible to go to the university system." If you still can't tell where Bush stands on Proposition 209, neither, apparently, can the nation's top political reporters. Dan Balz of *The Washington Post* interpreted Bush's statement as supportive of 209, writing that "Bush said he supported the goals of Proposition 209" and that he "has never come closer to endorsing the initiative." But *The New York Times*' Richard Berke came away with the exact opposite impression. Bush "refused to endorse" Proposition 209, Berke reported, and his "remarks were a striking departure for a Republican presidential candidate" as he signaled "his more moderate position" on affirmative action. Usually when a politician wants to have it both ways, he has to make at least two separate contradictory statements. In Bush's case, it only took one.

TIME TO BAIL OUT: Perhaps it's been so long since the days of unconstrained defense spending that we've forgotten about the good old-fashioned cost overrun. Now along comes the F-22 Raptor, the proposed new Air Force "air superiority" fighter, to remind us. By all accounts, the F-22 is a magnificent flying machine, but its price has zoomed up, up, and away to about $187 million per fighter. That's at least double the cost of the most expensive current U.S. fighter, which is one reason a House subcommittee recently voted not to fund its production. One major selling point of the F-22 is that it may sport a Russian-designed ejection seat from the Zvezda Design Bureau. Usually when big projects get into trouble, the Pentagon divvies up the work among as many congressional districts as possible. Will the fighter now be sold as a jobs program for our "strategic partners" in Russia, too?

PAID EDITORIAL: On July 13, *The Washington Post* ran an op-ed by Michael A. Samuels urging the World Trade Organization to force the European Union to drop its tariffs on beef and bananas produced by U.S. firms. Samuels, who was identified only as a "former deputy U.S. trade representative and ambassador to the GATT," wrote: "Absent such changes, American agriculture . . . will be unable to view the WTO as a place to go for the redress of legitimate grievances." Fair point, perhaps—but readers might also have wished to know that Samuels is currently a paid adviser for Chiquita. Maybe that's why his article was suspiciously devoid of the usual lame banana puns.

DEPARTMENT OF MISPLACED PRIORITIES: In recent months, the Department of Energy has not only proved itself to be incompetent at safeguarding the nation's nuclear weapons secrets, but it has also been forced to admit that it continues to bungle the disposal of radioactive waste. (Note the June 3 wire service reports that "[a]fter spending nearly $500 million, the Energy Department has acknowledged that a crucial stage in the disposal of millions of gallons of highly radioactive waste is a failure and should have been abandoned years ago.") So, what's an embattled agency to do? Now the DOE plans to devote more attention to the ongoing race to map the human genome. Although its role in the project was long ago overshadowed by work at the National Institutes of Health, the DOE recently spent $5 million to purchase 24 DNA sequencing machines for its Joint Genome Institute. The department accelerated its efforts shortly after a private firm announced that it should have the genome sequenced within three years. Nothing like a little pointless rivalry to improve agency morale. ■

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White coats, blue collars.

Doctors Unite

By JOSHUA M. SHARFSTEIN

IT WASN'T PARTICULARLY surprising that the American Medical Association, in announcing its plans to organize the nation's physicians into a union, depicted the decision as one aimed at helping patients. "Our objective here is to give America's physicians the leverage they now lack to guarantee that patient care is not compromised or neglected for the sake of profits," declared Dr. Randolph D. Smoak Jr., chairman of the AMA board of trustees.

What was surprising, however, was that so many people expressed hope about the AMA's claim. *The New York Times*, for instance, editorialized in favor of the AMA's decision, noting that "for consumers, unionization may be a positive force if doctors use collective bargaining to negotiate for improved patient services rather than merely for higher physician pay." The state of Texas is even counting on it. Last month, Governor George W. Bush signed a law that relaxes antitrust rules to allow groups of independent doctors to bargain collectively. Bush boasted that his state now "provides a check and balance to make sure that HMOs are not able to unfairly use their market power to dictate the quality of patient care."

Unfortunately, though, the track records of the AMA and physician monopolies suggest that putting patients first won't exactly dominate the agenda of any union of practicing physicians. The AMA, after all, is the same organization that fought for years against limiting the out-of-pocket charges doctors can bill Medicare beneficiaries. The AMA has also been willing to favor pro-tobacco legislators with its political contributions—even as it has singled out smoking as a public health threat—in cases where those legislators also support the financial interests of physicians.

As for physician monopolies, in the few places where physicians have collectively controlled the supply of medical services, they've focused more on winning top dollar for themselves than on top care for patients. For instance, when orthopedic surgeons in Delaware collectively boycotted the state's Blue Cross/Blue Shield program in 1998, the Justice Department alleges, the driving force was opposition to fee cuts—even though the insurer's new fees were still higher than those paid in nearby Philadelphia. Similarly, in Tampa Bay, 29 general and vascular surgeons formed a corporation to negotiate with managed care companies; the most tangible result of the negotiations was the $430,000 in extra pay they earned the physicians in 1997. "The participants in that scheme did not take any collective action that improved quality of care," Assistant Attorney General Joel Klein recently noted while voicing his opposition to antitrust relief for physicians before the House Judiciary Committee.

ROBERT NEUBECKER

Even allowing that some new professional ethic or strict legislative arrangement might limit the ability of physicians' unions to negotiate prices, the conflict inherent in a labor market for physician services will threaten to undermine any potential benefit to patients. Perhaps the most telling example of what physicians' unions might mean in practice comes from a recent dispute between managed care giant Aetna

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and doctors in Louisville, Kentucky.

The trouble started in 1996, when Aetna began to require physicians who accept any one of its plans to accept all of them; Aetna's long-term goal is for employers to be able to switch among its plans without requiring employees to change physicians.

Normally, Aetna's significant market share would allow it to get away with this sort of thing and essentially dictate contract terms to individual physicians and practices. But, in Louisville, where 1,800 physicians have banded together to form an association called The Physicians, Inc. (TPI), Aetna met some stiff resistance.

This past March, TPI gave 120 days' notice that it would not renew its Aetna contract, saying that the proposed "all products" clause forced physicians to accept insurance plans that they were not prepared for and to agree to future plans not yet defined. In large part, the dispute was about control, but it also had potential implications for the quality of patient care. Forcing reluctant doctors to receive a fixed amount of money for just a few HMO patients creates a huge incentive to reduce the care provided them—or to provide such bad care that costly patients leave altogether.

Although TPI isn't a union, and its members are allowed to make their own deals with Aetna, as many as 1,000 Louisville physicians—backed by the local medical society and the AMA—prepared to drop their Aetna patients. It wasn't until June, after State Insurance Commissioner George Nichols III used the threat of an investigation to push Aetna to the bargaining table, that the impasse was temporarily resolved. TPI physicians had offered to see Aetna patients until employer contracts expired; under pressure, Aetna agreed to pay them until then or until March 31, 2000.

FROM THE MARKET'S perspective, the TPI/Aetna dispute has been a clear success. Aetna, acting in its own interest, attempted to force a contract provision on doctors. But TPI, acting in the physicians' interest (with some potential collateral benefit to patients), refused to agree to the ultimatum. Since neither side exerted monopoly power, both could walk away and plan to make other arrangements. That's how a balanced labor market should work.

From the bedside, however, the Louisville conflict has been a disaster. Thousands of area patients still face the loss of clinicians whom they trust with their health; that means that, sooner or later, some patients will have trouble finding and visiting new doctors. Compelling evidence exists that patients who do not have regular physicians have more trouble finding care in times of illness; in one recent study, having a regular physician better predicted access to care than did insurance status. About the only remedy offered to Aetna customers in Louisville comes from Nichols, who now advises them to follow some "consumer tips"—including asking their present doctors questions such as "What other insurance do you accept?" and "Does your office expect problems with any of these insurance companies that might cause you not to accept their insurance during the next twelve months?" There's nothing like asking whether you're about to be abandoned to start off the doctor-patient relationship on the right foot.

No doubt, many Americans are suffering from overzealous cost containment by insurance companies. But that doesn't mean we should suffer even more from disruptive conflicts between physicians' unions and insurers. The fundamental problem with our health care system is that it already relies too heavily on market forces—namely, insurance companies striving to increase their profits—to make reasonable decisions about the public good. Introducing yet another quasi-industrial mechanism—in the form of doctors able to use collective bargaining to increase their compensation—will be a particularly inefficient and unfair form of quality control. In the end, unionization may be the right prescription for what ails some of America's physicians. But, for patients, it will be just another highly touted panacea that winds up making matters worse. ■

Assessing the bioterrorism threat.

Biohazard

By W. SETH CARUS

ON JULY 14, a bipartisan commission headed by former CIA Director John Deutch will release its report on the readiness of the United States to deal with weapons of mass destruction. While the Deutch commission expresses concerns about loose Russian nukes and Chinese missile exports, it's also alarmed by the prospect of terrorists armed with biological weapons. Among the commission's nightmarish scenarios is an anthrax attack on a crowded subway system that sends 6,000 people to the hospital. "These events have not taken place," the panel intones, "but they could."

The Deutch commission is the latest example of how nervous Washington has become about bioterrorism. Senior Clinton administration officials are convinced that bioterrorism poses an imminent and serious, perhaps cataclysmic, danger. Their budget reflects that conviction: the fiscal year 2000 budget proposal includes $1.4 billion for both chemical and biological terrorism responses, double the 1999 spending levels. This includes the Department of Health and Human Services's Bioterrorism Initiative, whose budget ballooned from $14 million in fiscal year 1998 to $158 million this year; and the fiscal year 2000 budget calls for $230 million. In addition, the FBI, the Federal Emergency

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Management Agency, and the Departments of Agriculture, Defense, Energy, and Justice have smaller initiatives.

Yet it's far from clear how grave the bioterrorism threat really is. Thanks to the dearth of empirical data on bioterrorism, it's nearly impossible to make accurate threat assessments. Since 1945, only about 23 terrorist groups are known to have even thought about using biological weapons—and the evidence to support some of these allegations is extremely thin. Of the 23 groups, only seven actually possessed a biological agent, and only four of them tried to use those weapons in any fashion. The only successful act of biological terrorism occurred in 1984, when the Rajneeshee, a cult group then based in rural Oregon, used biological agents to make 751 people sick as part of a plot to influence the outcome of an election. By contrast, the Aum Shinrikyo cult in Japan devoted considerable effort to developing biological weapons. The cult tried to spread anthrax and botulinum toxin approximately ten times between 1990 and 1995, but it was totally unsuccessful. Japanese officials reportedly believe that Aum used a harmless vaccine strain of anthrax and never produced botulinum toxin.

TO BE SURE, just because terrorists haven't had much interest in, or success with, biological weapons in the past doesn't mean they won't use them in the future. Reports of varying quality suggest that Osama Bin Ladin, the Islamic Jihad, and the Kurdish PKK have shown some interest in bioterrorism during the past few years. Similarly, some domestic terrorist groups have also reportedly demonstrated an interest. But, with rare exceptions—such as the two men belonging to the Minnesota Patriots Council who, in 1995, were found guilty of producing the ricin toxin as part of a plot to kill government officials—there is no compelling evidence that any of these groups, foreign or domestic, have actually acquired biological agents or even know how to use them. Indeed, the evidence suggests that terrorists are unlikely to acquire biological weapons unless they get them from a state sponsor.

The only surefire bioterrorism threat assessments we do have are, for the most part, about the now-ubiquitous anthrax hoaxes. Since March 1998, there have been more than 150 publicly reported incidents of someone falsely claiming that a victim had been exposed to anthrax. A wide array of hoax perpetrators have discovered that, for the price of a first-class stamp or a call from a pay phone, they can generate considerable fear and confusion. Anti-abortion activists have disrupted dozens of abortion clinics in this way; and, apparently in retaliation, anti-abortion demonstrators themselves have been victims of similar hoaxes. Students, some as young as twelve , have sent anthrax threats to their schools. One man interrupted his bankruptcy proceeding by telephoning in an anthrax threat; another man tried the same ploy to get out of work early.

So, if it's impossible to accurately gauge the bioterrorism threat, why is the U.S. government so worried? One major reason is that the scenarios generated by security analysts to illustrate the potential dangers of biological agents are so scary. The only problem is that, since there's so little empirical data about bioterrorism, the scenarios are necessarily works of fiction; scenario writers, limited only by their imaginations, are free to dream up almost any kind of threat. Thus, even a mildly creative analyst can dream up threats that overwhelm any reasonable set of response capabilities. Yet, such scenarios provide little insight into the types of agents that might be used or how they would be used, because they are not based on a factual understanding of terrorist motivations or capabilities. Rather, they reflect the biases of the scenario writer.

But the government's fear of bioterrorism isn't completely unfounded. Even if we don't know much about the terrorists, there is a large and authoritative body of knowledge about the use and effects of biological agents—and it is scary. This technical data, much of it obtained prior to the cancellation of the U.S. offensive biological program in 1969, demonstrates that it's possible to place large populations at risk by releasing appropriately prepared pathogens into the air. Even relatively small quantities of biological agents can have catastrophic results: a panel of World Health Organization experts calculated that 50 kilograms of anthrax released over a city of half a million people would kill 95,000 and incapacitate another 125,000. Some experts believe that, pound for pound, biological weapons are potentially more lethal than thermonuclear warheads.

Despite the Biological Weapons Convention prohibition on possession of biological weapons, the U.S. intelligence community apparently believes that at least a dozen countries may have offensive biological weapons programs. Among those countries are two of the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council—China and Russia—and all six countries on the State Department's list of state supporters of terrorism—Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Sudan, and Syria. Significantly, Iran, Iraq, and North Korea are the three countries most likely to confront the United States militarily. While there's no current evidence that any of these countries has given biological weapons to any terrorist group, it's not difficult to imagine circumstances in which such a transfer could happen.

Moreover, the absence of evidence regarding terrorists' capabilities to employ biological agents is not necessarily comforting. Collecting intelligence on biological weapons programs—even on state programs—is extremely difficult. For instance, the intelligence community knew nothing of Aum Shinrikyo's efforts to develop and use biological agents until after the Tokyo sarin attacks. The first indication of terrorist possession of biological warfare capabilities may only come when those capabilities are used.

IN THE ABSENCE of credible threat assessments, there is no way to quantify the seriousness of the threat or to calculate the resources needed to respond. Nor is it possible to predict with confidence which specific biological agents terrorists might adopt, how they might employ them, or where the potential targets might be located. This makes it difficult to properly allocate resources and suggests caution in developing responses.

Therefore, the focus of our bioterrorism response policy

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ought to be on programs that make sense even if the nation never experiences a single bioterrorism attack. One such program is the Center for Disease Control's (CDC) Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS), which investigates unusual disease outbreaks. It was created in the early 1950s specifically because of concerns that foreign powers might use biological weapons against the United States. The CDC has sent EIS officers to investigate thousands of disease outbreaks, and, although the EIS has never identified a foreign biowarfare attack on the United States, most public health experts believe the service is a valuable and cost-effective part of the nation's public health infrastructure.

FROM THIS PERSPECTIVE, many aspects of the Clinton administration's plans are quite sensible. The first indication of a bioterrorism attack is likely to be the appearance of sick people, which justifies efforts to improve the nation's disease-surveillance systems to detect and then responds promptly to outbreaks. Public health laboratories need to be upgraded, both to identify biological agents and to ensure that results are quickly circulated. Considering that the nation's public health infrastructure has been woefully underfunded for decades, these initiatives would make considerable sense, even if there were no bioterrorism threat.

Other activities that the administration wants to fund are so small, and the potential scientific benefits so large, that the expenditure is justified. Thus, spending $24 million for the National Institutes of Health to research likely threat agents and develop new treatments for them makes considerable sense. Providing training and equipment to the country's largest cities as part of the National Domestic Preparedness program is also good policy. Even if no terrorist attacks occur, the training will enhance local capabilities to respond to hazardous materials incidents.

Unfortunately, some programs the administration wants to fund will provide tangible benefits only if a terrorist actually uses a biological agent, and, thus, they require more scrutiny. This is true for devices designed to provide rapid detection and identification of biological agents in the field. The medical stockpile program, through which the CDC will create reserves of antibiotics and certain vaccines, is more problematic. Although the CDC is finding ways to reduce the cost of stocking antibiotics, the vaccines are extremely costly and could be useless. In the absence of adequate threat assessments, it's impossible to know what types of agents terrorists might use; a stockpile of anthrax and smallpox vaccines won't do much good against tularemia or Marburg.

In the final analysis, there is a compelling need to enhance the nation's ability to contend with the possibility of biological terrorism. The threat, however, is less compelling and not as imminent as often claimed. And the threat is most likely to originate from a foreign government's bioweapons program. Given these uncertainties, we have almost no ability to predict the character of a bioterrorism attack. Therefore, greater effort needs to be made to justify spending on bioterrorism responses to ensure that the resources are spent wisely. ■

The future of Serbia is desperate to leave.

Lost Generation

By JANINE DIGIOVANNI

IT'S THURSDAY, JUNE 24, the day that all but one member of the Yugoslav federal parliament voted to lift the official state of war. In Belgrade, it's a cold, gray, Balkan kind of day, and nobody is celebrating. Not my 22-year-old friend Ivana, whom I met while she was working as an interpreter in Pristina, nor her tall, baby-faced best friend, Ana. Both of them are hung over from drinking too much cheap domestic vodka the night before.

Their friend Ivan is not celebrating either. He is stuck working at a graphic design firm for $100 a month—when he really wants to be back at university. Ivana's brother, 18-year-old Djordje, and his best friend, Nemanja, don't even know the war is over yet; they're too busy plotting their escape from Serbia. Buried in their MTV videos and Michael Jordan posters, they've already left in spirit.

Seeing these young Yugoslavs trapped by the Milosevic regime, which they did not choose, is painful. (I cannot give their last names because, in Belgrade today, most people are paranoid—with good reason. They fear that their phones may be tapped and that they could be threatened by the police.) These are kids who did not actively oppose the current government, either. But they still seem to be a sort of Lost Generation—only without the glamour and the champagne cocktails. In 1990, when the first of Yugoslavia's wars—the one against Slovenian secession—started, the nation was just about to move closer to the West. Yugoslavia's youths got a tantalizing taste of life in modern society; then, suddenly and terribly, it was snatched from them. Since then, they've known nothing but a series of losing wars, dead soldiers, sanctions, economic meltdown, anti-Milosevic demonstrations, and gloom.

Now, they want to leave this place, but they worry about becoming impoverished immigrants in a strange country that will view them as evil. They feel proud of their heritage but ashamed of the destruction Slobodan Milosevic has caused over the past decade. They want to be open-minded about the atrocities committed in the past three months by their army, but, at the same time, their friends were serving in that army, and they can't believe these friends could have been involved in such monstrous crimes. They resent the United States, Great Britain, France, and the rest of the NATO powers for bombing them, yet they desperately want to go live in those very nations. They are, in short, racked with contradictory emotions that spring from a source far deeper than the usual post-teenage angst.

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"We can't go anywhere; we're trapped here," moans Ivana, her face pale from her hangover. She's reading an article in the newspaper that says that, in 40 years' time, the Serbian economy will be back to its 1989, prewar state. According to an independent economic society called G-17, she reads aloud, the GDP is 44.4 percent lower than last year because of the war. The damage caused by NATO is estimated at $29.6 billion.

Ana interrupts to point out that Belgrade took 30 years to reconstruct after World War II. "I know because my grandmother told me," she says. "I don't want to wait thirty years to have a normal life." World War II, of course, caused far more damage here than the NATO bombing campaign, but Ana's susceptibility to the false analogy is itself an indication of how out of whack the thinking of Serbian youths has become. "This is what I call 'Futureless in Belgrade,'" Ivana adds. "Something like *Sleepless in Seattle*, but without jokes."

Elegant and haughty even in her black combat jeans and platform sneakers, Ivana comes from a long line of proud Serbs: her paternal great-grandfather was a colonel in the royal army under King Peter and King Alexander; her father's family once owned big houses in downtown Belgrade that were confiscated under Tito's regime. Now, nearly all the members of her father's family have emigrated. One uncle, an opera singer, lives on the Upper East Side. Her grandfather lives in Washington.

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

Let me out of here.

Ivana wants to go, too, but she can't. Her Yugoslav passport carries heavy restrictions, so it's hard to get a visa. Even applying for one is difficult: you have to go Budapest first because there are no embassies here. Meanwhile, Ivana and her friends, all students in the faculty of philosophy at Belgrade University, can't finish their studies: the universities closed during the bombings, and they can't get the funding to study abroad.

These youths also have the inherited sense of Serb victimization—the ingrained certainty that the world is against them. They don't seem to realize how much harder this makes it to sympathize with them. "I wrote to Columbia University," Ivana says. "I've got top grades. Good recommendations. They didn't even bother to reply." She thinks it might be because she's a Serb. Columbia's letter might just as easily have been lost in the mail, but she doesn't consider that. In 1997, she lived in France for three months while her mother was dying of cancer and getting medical treatment there. She felt like a pariah: "When one person heard where I came from—Belgrade, Serbia—he didn't want to talk to me."

Ivana, intelligent, beautiful, and cultured, feels suffocated here by the weight of the past and by the nonexistent future. She is convinced the only way she can start a new life is by leaving. "Emigration is always hanging over my head," she says. "The saddest thing is that all my friends are leaving or want to go. I know that, in ten years' time, none of us will be living in the same country." She lists all her friends who have left for England, the United States, Ireland, and France.

"When I graduated from high school in 1990, the future seemed so amazing," says Ivana's close friend Ivan, who is also a student of archaeology. He's sitting in a downtown Belgrade café called Ipanema, drinking a cappuccino that he can't really afford and smoking Marlboro Lights made in Romania. Across the road is the grinding sound of a chain saw: people are chopping down trees to heat homes during the upcoming winter, which is predicted to be a harsh one. "Then, I had hope. The wars hadn't started yet. I was proud of my country. Proud to be a Yugoslav. In those days, you thought: 'Yes, I'll get a good job and be able to buy a car and get an apartment with my girlfriend.' Then, it might have been possible. Now, it's not."

Both Ivan and Ivana live with their families. Ivana says she hates her father's small, dark flat in New Belgrade's wasteland of Soviet-style projects. It is a modern place on the seventh floor with a view of the other depressing, block-style buildings. She yearns for some of the airy, romantic properties her family lost under communism. Inside the flat, you see the schizophrenia of modern Serbia. The charmless Communist-era place is cluttered with remnants from before World War II: a heavy, dark mahogany dining room table from the

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turn of the century; fading pastel-colored icons with mournful Madonnas; oil paintings by Ivana's grandmother; leather-bound books.

In Ivana's small bedroom, the walls are covered with sheets of paper listing the letters of the Greek alphabet. She's studying ancient Greek, she says, because it makes her think of a more civilized time. She already speaks perfect English, passable French, and some German. She's nagging Djordje to practice his English "so he can get out of this country."

"I'd rather go to Miami than Connecticut," Djordje interjects, staring at "Lenny Kravitz Unplugged" on MTV. It's partly because he loves Will Smith and saw the music video for his song "Welcome to Miami."

"You're going to Connecticut," interrupts his father, Antonio, an architect. Antonio is trying to arrange a student exchange for his son, a basketball star, through a former Yugoslav basketball player who is charging Antonio about three months' salary to place Djordje in an American suburban family's home for a year. "It's healthier. It's old America. Miami isn't America." Later, Antonio explains to me that "for my kids, getting out is a matter of survival.... I don't think you realize how empty their future is."

I think I do, because day after day I plod around Belgrade—gray even when the sun is out—with Ivana. I can feel the desperation pouring out of her, and, when I look at her, I can't help thinking that, had she not been born in Tito's Yugoslavia in 1977 and come of age under Milosevic's regime, she would be destined for a great job, a beautiful flat, a happy life. But, sitting in the Russian Tsar Café on Kneza Mihajlova, swinging her stork-like legs from a bench, she's just a bored kid with no future, no passport, not even Yugoslav citizenship: she forgot to register with the authorities every six months as required. "I don't exist," she says.

In her postwar Belgrade, the days pass uneventfully. The municipality chops down more trees. People are panicking about possible shortages of petrol, heat, and electricity. Drunk reservists, who have not been paid, block the road near Kraljevo. Few people talk about mass graves or Serbian atrocities committed in Kosovo because they genuinely believe these are all lies and propaganda from the West. Or maybe they just can't face what they, as a people, have done, have created. The anomie felt by Ivana and her compatriots is increasingly being translated into mass demonstrations against Milosevic's regime. Just over the past ten days, in cities across Serbia, thousands of marchers have turned out to call for the strongman to step down. Still, given the fractured nature of the opposition movement, no one is sure how that goal might actually be accomplished. "I don't think anything is going to change," Ivana tells me several days before a major demonstration in the nearby town of Cacak.

It is Saturday, June 26. Ivana and I are sitting in a café on the Danube. And, as usual, we're plotting her escape. "This way the river runs to Romania," she points out, "this way to Germany." From Germany, I tell her, it's easy: you get a train to France; from France go to England; from England go to America.

My mobile phone suddenly rings. It is an unexpected call from a Kosovar Albanian friend of mine who is exactly the same age as Ivana. I met this friend in Albania, where she was working for Human Rights Watch. Together, we spent three weeks trailing the Kosovo Liberation Army in mid-May. We spent three days in trenches together, getting bombed by NATO planes and Serb MiGs; as a result, we bonded for life.

This friend is also a member of the Lost Generation, but she is going through a different kind of hell than Ivana is. On March 22, two days before the NATO bombing began, she was sitting in a café in Pristina. One minute, she was drinking coffee; the next minute, she was lying in a pool of blood and broken glass and bullets, the victim of a random attack by Serbian gunmen. When she opened her eyes, she was bleeding from fortunately superficial wounds on her neck and arm.

Soon after, she was forced to flee Pristina in such haste that she didn't have time to change out of her hospital pajamas. Serb soldiers confiscated and destroyed her passport. She was separated from her mother and little sister while crossing the Albanian border. And, finally, upon reaching Tirana, she was brutally attacked by local Albanian men. She has yet fully to confront the horrors she's endured. Instead, she responded by immediately throwing herself into her work.

When I tell Ivana my friend's story, it both horrifies and fascinates her. She tries to picture her twin, an Albanian of exactly the same age, who is 300 miles away and as deeply unhappy at the prospects of her future as she is, though for different reasons. "I'm fucked up," Ivana says. "And I didn't go through what she did."

She asks if my friend also wants to emigrate, to start a new life. Yes, I reply, as soon as she can get some documents. Ivana is silent for a moment. She stares at the passing boats, which move slowly over the polluted black water. "But everyone is leaving Yugoslavia!" She corrects herself: "What once was Yugoslavia." Her head droops. "Who's going to be left here?" ■

Arts and ideas according to "The New York Times."

Cultural Misconceptions

By LEE SIEGEL

THERE IS SOME good news to report, and there is some bad news. The good news is that *The New York Times* has been expanding its cultural coverage. The bad news is that *The New York Times* has been expanding its cultural coverage.

The addition, a year and a half ago, of the Arts & Ideas section is only the most obvious recent step that the newspaper of record has taken to enlarge its culture beat. Cultural subjects increasingly appear in just about every section of the paper, from the business pages to the editorial page. The weekly publishing column—now called "Making Books"—which once concerned itself mostly with the business of sell-

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ing books, now routinely comments on literary and intellectual matters. The Week in Review has also gotten in on the act. Yet, even as the *Times* pursues cultural topics through its pages with a near obsessive persistence, its reductive approach has the effect of making them vanish into thin air.

TO BE SURE, there are things that a newspaper can do and things that a newspaper cannot do. Any conscientious critic of the *Times*—still the most powerful and influential news forum in the country, for all the rival media and for all its internal changes—first has to defend the *Times* from one particular criticism. This is the fanciful notion that, after a brief golden period of arts criticism and arts writing, in the mid-'60s, the *Times* abandoned any kind of standards or critical thinking and virtually turned its arts and culture sections into "lifestyle" supplements driven by frankly commercial motives. The most relentless critic of the *Times*, Hilton Kramer, is fond of lamenting what he sees as the paper's cynical adoption in the 1970s of countercultural values and what he regards as its surrender, at the same time, to crass economics. Kramer's criticism, however, attributes too much malign premeditation to the newspaper. It is also beside the point.

For the *Times* is not the *Journal of Philosophy*, and it is not the *Threepenny Review*. Once countercultural values devolved—or evolved—into acceptable middle-class values, and once these values became exploitable occasions for crass economics, the *Times*, like every other mainstream cultural institution and business enterprise, rotated self-preservingly toward the source of income and appeal. Kramer castigates the culture for its shifting status quo, and then he castigates the *Times* for shifting along with the culture. But the *Times*, for all its progressivish effusions, is very much rooted in the status quo. It is the newspaper of record, after all. It is also a business. You cannot criticize the attributes of a thing while ignoring its essence.

It is a question of inherence. And the inherent traits of a newspaper are why the so-called golden period of *Times* cultural writing is a straw man. It never existed. There were solid, perceptive, highly discriminating critics in the '60s, such as Clive Barnes, Renata Adler, and Kramer himself. But there is a reason why, also during that time, Kenneth Tynan turned down an invitation to write for the *Times*, and why Adler shortly quit. The reason is that the finest criticism and the best cultural writing require space and time, and a newspaper provides neither space nor time. Within those constraints, there are good newspaper critics and there are bad newspaper critics. Sometimes, as in the case of the *Times*' current cultural critic-at-large, Edward Rothstein, there are remarkably gifted writers in a newspaper's employ. But a newspaper is still a newspaper.

A convincing critique of the way the *Times* treats culture has to follow a different path. It has to see to what degree and with how much critical judgment and skeptical intelligence the *Times* makes its necessary concessions; it has to see whether, along with meeting its obligations to its basic institutional needs, the *Times* meets its obligations to its readers. And, by these standards, in the culture department, the *Times* too often is not meeting its obligation to its readers.

THIS HAS A great deal to do with changes in the way the *Times* reports the news. Whereas the news reporting has loosened up, allowing for subjective analysis and judgment, the culture coverage now uses the same criteria of "pegs" and relevance and measurable evidence that once guided the tone of a news story, and also determined what was fit to print.

You need only take a look at the *Times*' coverage of the current New York production of *Death of a Salesman* in order to see both the size of the newspaper's growing appetite for things cultural, and the diminished results of its approach. Since *Salesman*'s New York opening in February, the *Times* has not been able to pull its good gray brain away from Arthur Miller's play. By now, the *Times* has run several articles about *Salesman* and made numerous references to the play in otherwise unrelated pieces. But, as this peculiar obsession has unfolded through the arts pages, the hard-news pages, the columns, and The Week in Review, it has become clear that the *Times* is not treating *Salesman* as a work of imagination, or even as a work of culture. Instead, the *Times* is in thrall to *Salesman* as if to an ideal of news-friendly art.

Indeed, in this production, even the play's structure resembles the news article's classic format: the "inverted pyramid," in which the basic outline precedes the causative background. In the current *Salesman*, we hear the car crash, see the beleaguered man, and get a sense of what has happened. The remainder of the play consists of background in the form of flashbacks. To excite the newspaper of record's undying enthusiasm, *Salesman* requires only a peg that quantifies personal experience. Happily, there is the issue of depression.

Last fall, reviewing the Chicago production of the play, Ben Brantley wrote of "a sense of engulfing night that evokes William Styron's notion of emotional depression as 'darkness visible.'" Just before the play opened in New York, John Tierney picked up the ball in his column, "The Big City." "It is tempting to conclude," Tierney opined, after some investigative work yielded the scoop that Willy Loman was modeled on Miller's Uncle Manny, "that the real-life Willy Loman's tragedy was being born before the age of antidepressant drugs." Three days later, in his review of the New York *Salesman*, Brantley continued the theme:

> Mr. Miller, who had originally titled the play "The Inside of His Head," has said he thought of having it occur in a set that would indeed be in the shape of a man's head. Although Mr. Falls and his expert production team are mercifully less literal, that is effectively the landscape they create here.... [The] lighting floods the stage with a darkness that is always threatening to consume, the image of the tidal pull of depression itself.

Now, it would be just as easy to say that Miller toyed with the idea of setting the play inside his protagonist's head, not as a way to psychologize Willy's environment, but as a way

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to socialize the human psyche. But Brantley doesn't grapple with an argument. He simply asserts: "Although Mr. Falls and his expert production team are mercifully less literal, that is effectively the landscape they create here." Brantley does not make his case for depression as an artistic conception that has inspired a set meant to evoke depression. So he relies on an illusion of measurable consequences—the whole paragraph hangs on the overambitious "effectively"—to conjure up nonexistent causes. A solid peg is born. *Salesman* is now a saleable news item.

Three weeks later, in The Week in Review, Jesse McKinley carries on the brand-new tradition. "Could it be as simple as that?" he asks. "Willy Loman, manic-depressive.... What if he is really just a man struggling with a psychiatric condition that was poorly understood at the time the play was written?" McKinley does think it is as simple as that. He repeats the story about Miller and "The Inside of His Head." He repeats Brantley on *Salesman* and depression. He treats us to a whole article reducing Willy to a sum of generic psychological facts, complete with expert testimony about Willy's condition from the *Times*' house oracle on psychiatric matters, Peter Kramer. In the pages of Arts & Leisure, the highly visible doctor had previously diagnosed Chekhov's Ivanov as clinically depressed. Kramer is now concerned about Willy's condition. He imagines *Salesman*'s audiences thinking, "That's what happens when people with a propensity for late life attention deficit disorder reach that age."

BY THE END of March, the depression angle on *Salesman* is beginning to get stale. So the *Times* brings in Richard Sandomir, who immediately grasps the situation. "Willy Loman is the world's most famous failed salesman," he begins his article, "but what did he sell?" Harold Bloom, move over. Sandomir hits the pavement with his idea. He asks Gerald Weales, a distinguished theater scholar and drama critic, what Willy Loman sells. "I think it's safer not to say what he sells," Weales tells him. Sandomir is pleased. A nuance. And so he persists. He interrogates and deconstructs and underprivileges the text. The play mentions two Boston stores that Willy sold to: Filene's and Slattery's. Sandomir goes back and examines both stores' inventories at the time *Salesman* takes place, and then he checks these items against the play. This could be big. *All the Playwright's Men*. But he comes up empty-handed: "Mr. Miller keeps us guessing."

In late April, Walter Goodman takes up the question of Willy. This time, it appears alongside the question of Hickey in O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh*, which has just opened on Broadway. Goodman outlines a sociology of the salesman. He quotes C. Wright Mills and David Riesman, and he weighs Willy the character against the idea of "other-directedness." "Even before the appearance of *The Lonely Crowd*," Goodman reports, "psychologists had diagnosed the emotional cost of 'other-directedness,' which deprives a Willy Loman of any footing when things turn bad," etc., etc. And yet, he concludes, "Willy and Hickey still reach us with a despair that cannot be measured on the Nasdaq." This is reassuring, especially for small investors. But Goodman himself has just spent a whole article measuring Willy's despair!

No matter. In May, Dinitia Smith turns another angle. She celebrates Willy's wife, Linda, as a postfeminist heroine, portrayed in the current production not as a "dishrag," but as a wife who is both sexual and protective. Another catchy motif comes to life. It is like some weird news-fugue. And the play is still running....

Return for a moment to the way Brantley used "effectively" in his review of *Salesman*. "Effectively" is a word that slides past distinctions and keeps the newspaper reader's eye going fast down the page. But criticism gains its ability to make you think and see and consider more slowly and more carefully from spelling out distinctions. And not just criticism. Any consideration of works of thought and imagination, even the plainest exposition, repels such a method of speedy elision. Apply it and you grossly misapprehend your subject. And nowhere is this result more apparent than in Arts & Ideas.

ARTS & IDEAS, launched in November 1997, is the newspaper of record's newest cultural department. The section, appearing every Saturday, usually consists of a combination of music, dance, theater, film, and television reviews; a small boxed item called "Think Tank"; a long lead article; and a shorter article. The two feature articles and "Think Tank" make up the core of the new section. The features might offer profiles of intellectuals and academics, articles on intellectual trends, reports on the institutional arrangements that make professional thinking possible, or investigations of the ideas that lie behind current events. "Think Tank" serves as a kind of supplement. It might quote passages from the Stoic philosopher Epictetus, or report on popular and academic attitudes toward concepts like "honesty" and "lying." Or it might cover a convention of philosophers, or get various academics' thoughts on the subject of women and dolls.

Arts & Ideas is, well, a very fine idea. In theory. In a society where an increase in leisure time creates an abundance of activities to fill that time; where universities are bustling; where book publishing is thriving, and little magazines are multiplying; where just about everything is ruminated upon, examined, and analyzed—in such a society, it is good to know what is an idea and what is not an idea, and it is good to be able to consider genuine ideas and discriminate among them. A newspaper that helps make some sense of this chaos is a blessing.

But Arts & Ideas cannot be such a blessing when it has the imperative of snappy simplicity dogging its path. A typical example of the section's approach was its April 18, 1998, account, written by Patricia Cohen, of how liberal academic historians had recently discovered that American conservatism, like American liberalism, had a social history. Due to their political bent, Cohen informed us, the liberal scholars had overlooked this train of events. Now it was liberals themselves who were reviving interest in the academic study of conservatism in America, not conservatives. This was the article's not uninteresting twist.

Cohen begins by observing that modern American conservatism's "founding thinkers like Richard Weaver and

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Russell Kirk have rarely been read on college campuses." She continues:

> Liberal historians are discovering that characterizations of conservatives as either narrowly self-interested or extremists were crudely drawn.... One result is a more rounded picture of a variety of people who often don't share more than their hostility to liberalism: cold war anti-Communists, economic libertarians, neoconservatives, and traditionalists (the Catholic intellectuals and grass-roots fundamentalists who believe God and moral values should be pre-eminent in society).

Yet, in the very next paragraph, Cohen quotes a liberal historian who describes Orange County, California, conservatives in the '60s as organizing against the "red menace," "exchang[ing] newsletters and books like 'The Naked Communist,'" and joining the John Birch Society by the thousands. This angle does not exactly revise the notion of conservatives "as either narrowly self-interested or extremists." But Cohen's account of American society and politics goes way beyond illogic.

FOR ONE THING, there are plenty of liberal Catholic intellectuals who also believe that God "should be pre-eminent in society." More important, why does being an anti-Communist during the cold war, or someone who wishes for the spread of a belief in God and in "moral values" (is there a large and restless constituency out there that doesn't believe in some kind of moral values?), get identified, without qualification, with a "hostility to liberalism"? What picture of the world outside is the paper of record projecting into the heads of its readers? Especially its younger readers?

This, however, is mere prelude. Cohen goes on to characterize Lionel Trilling's preface to *The Liberal Imagination*:

> Many historians, accepting a hand-me-down liberalism, also didn't think they needed to study the right. "In the United States, liberalism is not only the dominant but even the sole intellectual tradition," Lionel Trilling famously declared in 1950. In the postwar blush, Trilling and other members of what is known as the consensus school believed the story of America was the story of progressive reform, secular liberal values and science....

But this is not what Trilling said in one of the most significant documents of American intellectual life. Trilling's preface is one of the most quietly devastating attacks on modern American liberalism ever composed. He believed that liberalism had hyperrationalized life to the exclusion of complexity and ambiguity and mystery. That is why, he wrote, modern American liberalism had crippled its ability to comprehend life. In the preface, Trilling wrote admiringly about how Mill had urged his fellow liberals to study the conservative Coleridge's writings. It was too bad, Trilling lamented to his own fellow liberals, that such a "powerful conservative mind" was not available as a dialectical corrective that might restore to modern American liberalism its "primal imagination." In short, in its quest for neat oppositions—liberals and conservatives, play ball!—tidy coincidences, and pat ironies, Arts & Ideas gets the story all wrong.

Now, what the *Times* has to say on these subjects influences the hurried, average intelligent reader's sense of reality no less than the *Times*' analysis of, say, Sino-Japanese relations influences the average diplomat's or businessman's sense of reality. Thus, when Cohen gets Trilling's preface wrong, she might just as well be describing in a news article a war between China and Japan when in fact they are not at war, or reporting on the collapse of the Tokyo stock market when stocks in Tokyo are actually soaring. She is perpetuating a division between liberals and conservatives that never did so clearly exist, and she is obscuring a moment in American history that gives the lie to all the silly dichotomies that our "national conversation" lives by and that real people don't.

OF COURSE, THERE are degrees of misinformation and inaccuracy. The nadir of Arts & Ideas's approach occurred several weeks ago, in an article about the British historian David Irving, which was written by D.D. Guttenplan. Irving, Guttenplan reported, filed suit against Deborah Lipstadt, an American historian of the Holocaust, for libel in England. Lipstadt has publicly identified Irving as a "dangerous spokesman for Holocaust denial" and called him a propagandist. Her charges, Irving claims, led a publisher to cancel its contract to bring out Irving's book on Joseph Goebbels. And now Irving, who has publicly declared that there were no gas chambers in Nazi Europe, is seeking legal redress.

As always, Arts & Ideas has a peg: "Can a writer who thinks the Holocaust was a hoax still be a great historian?" It is a question, in other words, of whether a writer who thinks the Holocaust was a hoax is a great historian, or just a historian. It is not a question of whether Irving is telling the truth. That would be too divisive, and ideas, in the pages of the *Times*, are occasions for leisure, not conflict. Thus Guttenplan covers the Irving story with a fine relaxing balance. He quotes eminent historians John Keegan, Gordon Craig, and Eric Hobsbawm (team Irving). He quotes eminent historian David Cannadine and less eminent historian Michael Geyer (team Lipstadt). In the process, the fine relaxing balance produces a coarse incoherence, as when Guttenplan writes:

> In an essay in *The New York Review of Books*, Mr. Craig noted Mr. Irving's claims that the Holocaust never took place, and that Auschwitz was merely "a labor camp with an unfortunately high death rate." Though "such obtuse and quickly discredited views" may be "offensive to large numbers of people," Mr. Craig argued, Mr. Irving's work is "the best study we have of the German side of the Second World War" and "we dare not" disregard his views.

But how can it be that, if Irving's views are obtuse and quickly discredited, we dare not disregard them? It is Guttenplan's responsibility to point out the contradiction and make sense of it, or even to ask Craig if he is aware of the contradiction and to inquire of Craig what he meant to say. Instead, Guttenplan lets the contradiction stand, as if it were not a contradiction at all but the outcome of balanced report-

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ing. He writes as though the Irving matter were not about truth and falsity with regard to the treatment of a documented historical event, but about a raw event that had not yet entered the historical record. Once again, in its quest for a neatly balanced opposition—Irving and Lipstadt, play ball!—Arts & Ideas ends up obscuring the true opposition. Guttenplan's pat irony—Irving's publisher "muzzled" Irving, and now Irving is trying to "silence" Lipstadt—makes it seem as if they are not really opposed at all, but merely at odds over a question of free speech. He concludes by noting:

> "Legal restraints," [Lipstadt] wrote, "transform the deniers into martyrs on the altars of free speech." It will be up to a British judge to decide whether that label fits either side in this case.

In the end, Guttenplan represents Irving and Lipstadt as two equivalent sides of the same intellectually diverting *issue*.

HOW TO EXPLAIN such a sloppy sacrifice of the truth? My hunch is that Arts & Ideas, and the culture sections in general, are the sublimated products of the *Times*' editors' fundamental attitudes toward culture. These attitudes are simple. Culture is soft. Culture is spongy. Culture is inconsequential. And so culture in the *Times* becomes as much a casual receptacle for thwarted idealism as a green pasture for retired standards. In Arts & Ideas, and in the culture sections generally, the *Times*' amiable toothless liberal impulses surface with such frequency because they are, by necessity, wrecked on the conflicts and contradictions that course through the hard news. One could say that the culture pages amount to a kind of sunny compensation for the tragic and ironic fate of human goodness that is perpetually chronicled in the news sections of the *Times*.

Far from being either a multiculturalist plot or a cynical, deliberate sellout to Mammon, Arts & Ideas is yet another stage in the *Times*' amiably clumsy plan to expand its cultural coverage, both as a way to practice its liberal sentiments, and to attract new readers by appealing to them on the basis of race, sexual preference, ethnic background, and gender. Especially gender. Arts & Ideas has featured article after article viewing fathers from a woman's perspective, locating a women's issue at the heart of an intellectual matter, exposing the maltreatment of female poets, examining the status of female economists, and addressing the concerns of "architectural feminists." It sometimes seems that the implicit mission of Arts & Ideas has been to recreate, in cultural guise, the homemaking pages that American newspapers once specifically designed for female readers. What progress.

And yet the culture writing still has to be toughened up with hard frameworks like the list and the timely issue. Thus you get "Think Tank" after "Think Tank" consisting of questionnaires sent out to writers asking them what they think is The Book They Would Most Like to Have Written; or to scholars asking them what they think is The Most Overrated Idea; or to scholars asking them what they think is The Most Underrated Idea. Or you get in "Think Tank" philosophical investigations of the concept of "lying" one week and of "honesty" another week—all in the course of the Lewinsky scandal, as if there were no ideas but in news.

These "Think Tank" supplements are hints of the real editorial crudeness toward culture and ideas that lies at the heart of the *Times*' cultural coverage. They are little spots of sheer instinct in Arts & Ideas's usually chipper inaccuracies and happy, crass dichotomies. For, ultimately, Arts & Ideas is the civilized face on the hard-news face; the new section is the newspaper of record's virtuous superego. To get a sense of the id, of the actual value the *Times* puts on culture, you have to turn to the *Times*' "Making Books" column. Written by Martin Arnold, the weekly feature guarantees the readership of thousands of people working in book publishing, the movie business, and related endeavors.

Arnold adores the high-powered publishing executives. He is in raptures over the sizzling book parties and the thrilling phone interviews with Michael Korda. But of the attention deficit disorder running riot through the bloated publishing industry, or of book publishing's steady obliteration of good writing and sharp thinking, nary a significant word from Arnold.

Instead of the illuminating and responsible publishing columns once penned by Esther B. Fein and Roger Cohen, Arnold writes about literature like a butcher performing bypass surgery. "Sade didn't write very well.... [T]he stuff of his work was sodomy, murder, torture, incest, self-indulgence of the wildest sort." "Critics have speculated that the cause of [Henry] Roth's profound literary malady was Jewish self-hatred, low self-esteem beaten into him by his violent father, and the apparent likelihood that the writer had incestuous relationships with his sister and a cousin. All the stuff of great novels, if the writer can just get it down on the pages." "It's like trying to sell Joyce. Few things make publishers and agents scurry away faster than short stories. Well, maybe poetry does, since occasionally a short story becomes a movie ... a fact that doesn't stop thousands and thousands of literary tourists from writing [short stories] in their spare time."

THAT LAST LITTLE gem doesn't only report conditions. It helps to create conditions. Fewer agents and editors than ever will risk publishing a volume of short stories now that the *Times* has officially declared such an enterprise a dead one. Some impressionable readers might not even buy a recently published volume of short stories. Imagine a gifted, special, ambitious young woman or young man, black or white or yellow or red or brown or gay or straight. No matter that she or he might be writing the most beautiful short stories of the past 50 years; she or he is still a "literary tourist." Martin Arnold and the *Times* have said so. So this young person's chances have diminished. And that indifference to the true nature and worth and power of culture seeps into all the *Times*' cultural coverage, right through to its latest foray into arts and ideas.

This is a minor but consequential crisis that cries out for relief. As Linda Loman, a woman, says in Arthur Miller's great American play, *Death of a Salesman*: "Attention must be paid." (Whatever her depressed husband was selling.) ■

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

How doctors and drug companies created the "social phobia" epidemic.

Selling Shyness

By MICHELLE COTTLE

> *"Fortunate boys!" said the Controller. "No pains have been spared to make your lives emotionally easy—to preserve you, so far as that is possible, from having emotions at all."*
> *Aldous Huxley,* BRAVE NEW WORLD

Do you have trouble speaking in public?
Do you have a hard time making friends?
Are you shy?

If so, researchers at MCP Hahnemann University in Philadelphia want you to contact them about enrolling in an ongoing research/treatment program funded by the National Institute of Mental Health. While you may long have considered shyness to be just another element of your personality, it seems that medical science has decided that this trait might actually be the expression of a chronic mental disorder.

And you are far from alone. According to the American Psychiatric Association, a veritable epidemic of morbid reticence is under way. The APA estimates that one in eight Americans will, at some point in his or her life, fall prey to social anxiety disorder—also known as social phobia. Social phobia, doctors say, can reduce even the most flamboyant personality to a trembling shut-in. No less a showman than Donny Osmond has written a memoir of his struggle with an uncontrollable fear of public spaces. Laurence Olivier and King George VI are also thought to have been social phobics. If the one-in-eight figure is correct, social phobia is the third most common mental illness, after depression and alcoholism.

A collection of doctors, corporations, and ordinary citizens is mobilizing to sound the alarm about this health menace—spreading the bad news that social phobia is rampant, along with the good news that it is now treatable with medication. In mid-May, the pharmaceutical maker SmithKline Beecham received FDA approval to market Paxil, an anti-

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depressant similar to Prozac, as a treatment for the disorder. Concurrently, a coalition of nonprofit groups (with financial support from SmithKline) launched a public awareness campaign about the condition, built around the clever slogan, "Imagine Being Allergic to People." Articles on the nightmare of social phobia have been popping up in newspapers around the country, and, in mid-June, the disorder officially hit the big time, with a cover story in *U.S. News & World Report*.

Social phobia, in short, is what physicians sometimes call a "hot diagnosis"—this year's version of the attention deficit disorder (ADD) boom that took off a few years ago. As with ADD, the research and marketing of social phobia—an affliction that barely registered in the professional literature a decade ago—illustrate how certain personality traits once considered troubling but "normal" can be recast as symptoms of a treatable medical condition.

This process does, of course, have an upside. Many people previously debilitated by their symptoms have benefited from increased awareness of depression and ADD and the medications now available to treat them. But the sudden surge of social phobia is also a reminder that disorders don't just happen. Definitions of illness and health do not belong solely to the white-coated realm of pure science. They are social, cultural, and economic phenomena as well. They are not invented, exactly, but coaxed and shaped into public acceptability by a cadre of medical researchers, mental health practitioners, pharmaceutical manufacturers, and advocacy groups—each operating from varying degrees of ambition, scientific knowledge, opportunism, and good intentions. This is often a long, arduous process. Even in America, where we're perpetually in search of new maladies to explain our discontent and depersonalize our behavior, it can take years for the populace to be taught that what was long thought to be a behavioral quirk is in fact a mental illness. Thus, the rise of social phobia offers a glimpse not so much at the anatomy of a specific illness as at the still inherently subjective nature of psychiatric medicine and the cultural forces that help draw the boundary between what we are told to think of as normal and what we are told to consider pathological.

> *"Our ancestors were so stupid and short-sighted that when the first reformers came along and offered to deliver them from those horrible emotions, they wouldn't have anything to do with them."*

A disorder like social phobia does not spontaneously arise, fully formed, from some fevered recess of the human brain. Before it can make its proper debut, teams of researchers and psychiatrists, working with perhaps only a handful of similar symptoms found in a scattering of patients, must conceptualize the condition, define it, and estimate what percentage of the population may be suffering from it. This last part is especially important because, for a mental illness to really generate buzz in the clinical and corporate communities, it needs to affect a lot of people.

At first glance, social phobia would seem to afflict everyone. According to a pamphlet put out by the Anxiety Disorders Association of America (ADAA), "The key element of social phobia is extreme anxiety about being judged by others or behaving in a way that might cause embarrassment or ridicule." In fact, some researchers believe that the roots of social phobia can be traced to a time when being judged and

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rejected by one's tribe meant banishment or death. Performance anxiety, in particular, seems to fit this scenario. (What was once termed "stage fright" is now classified as the most common form of social phobia). When you are standing in front of a group, preparing to speak, sing, dance, or play the accordion, members of the audience are judging you—especially if they've paid good money to be there. And, if such performances are in any way tied to your livelihood, there is the real possibility that failure could ultimately damage more than your pride. On an even more primitive level, we are hardwired to get nervous when someone—or something—is staring at us. Predators stare at their prey before devouring it. Staring matches are a way to establish hierarchies within social units, both human and primate. From this perspective, people who don't get freaked out when being eyeballed would seem to be the odd birds.

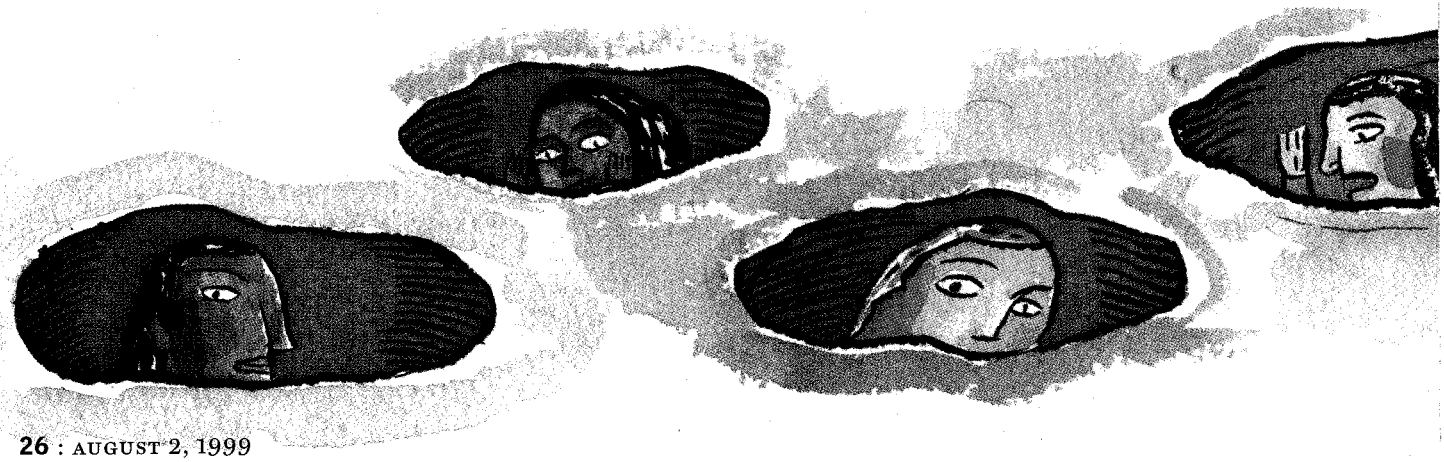
INDEED, PSYCHIATRY WAS initially reluctant to define social phobia in a way that would encompass vast numbers of patients. The disorder didn't officially enter the psychiatric lexicon until 1980, when it was included in the third edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), the APA's periodically updated—and ever-expanding—catalog of maladies, codifying everything from schizophrenia to kleptomania. While the majority of conditions are relatively noncontroversial, the DSM is a notoriously plastic document, only somewhat more insulated from social trends and ideological fashion than, say, your average weekly journal of opinion. For example, intrashrink warfare raged for years over whether to remove homosexuality from the list of sexuality-related maladies. (It was omitted from the 1974 edition of the DSM.) For patients and doctors, what's critical about the DSM is that, without an entry and code number in the manual (social phobia's is 300.23), a condition will not be covered by health insurers. Thus, the APA has more than a little incentive to codify as many behavioral mutations as it plausibly can.

But the DSM-III, as the 1980 edition is affectionately known, had very exacting standards for what constituted social phobia. First, the definition focused on patients with a fear of only one activity, such as writing, eating, or speaking in public; people with multiple or generalized social anxiety were thought to have a different condition altogether. Moreover, according to the DSM-III, it was not sufficient that a person fear a situation; to qualify, the fear had to compel one to avoid such a situation altogether. "The disorder," noted the DSM-III, "is apparently relatively rare."

The mid-'80s, however, marked a turning point in academic thinking about social phobia. In the early part of the decade, research indicated that only two to three percent of the population grappled with the problem; by the early '90s, observed prevalence rates were pushing double digits. Mental health advocates attribute this shift to a landmark study published in July 1985 by Michael R. Liebowitz, director of the Anxiety Disorders Clinic of the New York State Psychiatric Institute. In an article titled "Social Phobia: Review of a Neglected Anxiety Disorder," Liebowitz bemoaned the dearth of data on the malady and the lack of consensus about its diagnostic criteria and prevalence. He also criticized the DSM-III's limited definition, which, as he explains today, "narrowed and marginalized" the disorder, unnecessarily labeling those "with more severe general shyness" as having avoidant personality disorder (a completely different breed of illness that, as the 1985 study noted, was dismissed as largely unresponsive to "pharmacological interventions").

LIEBOWITZ'S ARTICLE CAUSED the medical community to take another look at social phobia, says Jerilyn Ross, president of the ADAA: "People were clamoring for information." And the more researchers explored the disorder, the more the psychiatric community gave it recognition. The first sign of change came when the APA loosened the definition of social phobia. In 1987, the association published a revised version of the DSM-III (dubbed, cleverly enough, the DSM-III-R). Liebowitz was on the advisory panel charged with updating the entry on social phobia. In light of additional analysis, he explains, the committee decided to include a generalized subtype of the condition. This addition, combined with the use of more comprehensive screening questionnaires, led to the subsequent rise in measured rates of the disorder's prevalence in the general population, says Liebowitz.

Perhaps even more significant, however, was the panel's decision to remove the phrase "a compelling desire to avoid" from the diagnostic criteria. From that point on, a person could be classified socially phobic if his anxiety simply caused



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him "marked distress." When asked about this crucial semantic shift, Liebowitz explains, "I think the issue there is that there are people who fight their way through difficult situations." These folks wouldn't meet the strict avoidance test, but they nonetheless endure social situations at "tremendous personal costs." "You don't want to penalize these people," he says. "You don't want to say that, in order to meet this definition and get reimbursed for treatment, they have to stop pushing themselves."

Whatever the rationale, the impact of these diagnostic shifts was impressive. A study published in the January 1994 *Archives of General Psychiatry* put the lifetime prevalence of social phobia among Americans at a whopping 13 percent—the attention-grabbing one-in-eight number now circulating. A later study, published in the February 1996 issue of the same journal, reported similar conclusions. Remarking on the dramatic increase in prevalence from earlier research, this study's authors explained that it was largely a matter of definition: had they used the DSM-III "avoidance" standard, the prevalence rate they reported would have dropped to 8.3 percent. Had they stuck with the more limited questionnaires of earlier studies, the rate would have dropped again to 4.8 percent.

THE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRES themselves invite a broad interpretation of social phobia. For instance, in the first phase of a Canadian study published in 1994, people were asked whether, in certain situations such as "attending social gatherings" or "speaking to a large audience," they tended to be "much more nervous," "somewhat more nervous," or "about the same as" other people. Those answering "much more" or "somewhat more" were then queried on which situation made them most uncomfortable and asked to rate the degree to which this had a negative impact on their lives and the degree to which this disruption "bothered" them. Response options were "none at all," "a bit," "a moderate amount," or "a great deal." (Based on DSM-III-R standards—"marked interference or distress"—this survey put the prevalence rate of social phobia at just over seven percent.)

This survey was conducted by phone—an arrangement hardly conducive to careful analysis by the interviewers. But these questions would have been open to major interpretation under any circumstances. It's human nature to assume that we are less comfortable or adept at schmoozing, public speaking, interviewing for jobs, or chatting up the opposite sex than other people are. This is particularly true during adolescence—which is, incidentally, when social phobia is said to strike most often. It is the rare, fortunate ego that has never hidden in the corner at a party, flubbed a job interview or key business meeting, or missed a shot at a hot date because of an attack of nerves. From this perspective, the Canadian questionnaire seems not so much a scientific gauge of mental illness as an invitation to share one's "normal" self doubts.

Having run across a number of other equally vague survey models, I decided to conduct an unscientific poll of my own. I asked some of my coworkers at TNR to take a short diagnostic test developed by a psychiatrist at Duke University. Participants were first asked to rank, on a scale of zero to four, their fear and avoidance of seven social situations: speaking in public or in front of others, talking to people in authority, talking to strangers, being embarrassed or humiliated, being criticized, social gatherings, and doing something while being watched (excluding speaking). Next, they were to rank the degree to which social situations caused them to experi-

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ence blushing, trembling, palpitations, or sweating.

The book from which I pulled the test, *Social Phobia*, by John R. Marshall, M.D., cautioned that "there is no absolute score that indicates social phobia." As a point of comparison, however, it noted that "patients in a treatment study for social phobia had pretreatment scores on this scale ranging from 19 to 56." Of the 23 TNR staffers to complete the survey (the rest were presumably too timid), a sizeable majority scored above 19. Based on these results, I've recommended that the magazine's benefits manager explore the possibility of getting a group discount on Paxil.

> *"And if ever, by some unlucky chance, anything unpleasant should somehow happen, why, there's always* soma *to give you a holiday from the facts. And there's always* soma *to calm your anger, to reconcile you to your enemies, to make you patient and long-suffering.... [S]wallow two or three half-gramme tablets, and there you are."*

WITHOUT QUESTION, IT can be much more exciting to be involved in the research or treatment of a mental disorder that afflicts 35 million people than one that afflicts, say, two million people. For one thing, the more victims an illness claims, the more pressure there is for the government to fund research on that illness. Currently, there are some 20-plus research projects on social phobia being funded by the National Institutes of Health. (In 1986, there was only one.)

But government dollars account for only a sliver of the funding pie. Presented with a large enough client base, the pharmaceutical industry will beat a path to your door. Interviewed in a recent *New York Times* article, Liebowitz, who moonlights as an industry consultant, noted that, once the prevalence rate of social phobia hit eight or nine percent (thanks, in no small part, to the expanded definition championed by Liebowitz), the drug companies developed a keen interest in the plight of the socially phobic.

This interest often manifests itself in the form of direct funding for research. Other times, companies funnel money through nonprofits such as the APA—whose social phobia website is supported by SmithKline—and the ADAA. The "Allergic to People" campaign is just one of a host of ADAA projects underwritten by the pharmaceutical industry, including educational materials, conferences, websites, outreach programs, and research. On July 19, the ADAA will hold a press conference to announce the findings of an economic impact study, underwritten by various drug manufacturers, that purports to quantify the high cost of anxiety disorders to the nation's productivity. (Similar studies have been produced for depression.) Three years ago, to facilitate such joint ventures, the ADAA formed a corporate advisory board comprising representatives from about ten drug firms. The board helps the association conceptualize and fund various educational projects. The ADAA's Ross describes the industry's participation in such efforts as "hands-off, but wonderfully supportive."

Nevertheless, the drug makers and the ADAA can be cagey about exactly who handles which parts of these projects. For instance, the "Allergic to People" campaign is being orchestrated by SmithKline's public relations firm, Cohn & Wolfe Healthcare. Some of the firm's work has been pro bono. The rest, according to Ross, was paid for directly by the pharmaceutical giant. "I purposely do not get involved. We don't want to know," she explains. SmithKline's Richard Koenig, however, insists that, for projects like this, the company simply hands money over to the ADAA to be distributed as the association sees fit.

Ross acknowledges that, because of the ADAA's advocacy role, the group's ties to the pharmaceutical industry require her to "walk a fine line." Her basic policy is "to never do anything that directly promotes or markets drugs or smacks of it." Even so, drug manufacturers often find ways to leave their fingerprints on the projects they support. A 1996 ADAA brochure on social phobia, "supported by an educational grant from SmithKline Beecham," notes that "[m]edications are usually effective in the treatment of social phobia and can be used with or without other treatments." No mention is made of the high "relapse" rates associated with drug treatment (the number cited most often is 50 percent within six months of stopping medication). And although no hard data exist to prove that a therapy-drug combination is more effective, practitioners generally believe this to be the case. "There is less likely to be any relapse if a person has had cognitive behavior therapy," says Ross, who runs her own treatment center for anxiety disorders. Someone who just takes medication, she explains, has no understanding of how to cope with stressful situations that arise down the road.

OF COURSE, EVEN the most disinterested education campaign benefits drug makers. Increasingly, the industry sees its marketing aim as peddling a disorder rather than just the pills to treat it. In *The Anti-Depressant Era*, David Healy, director of the North Wales department of psychological medicine at the University of Wales, notes that "drug companies obviously make drugs, but less obviously they make views of illnesses. They don't do so by minting new ideas in pharmaceutical laboratories, but they selectively reinforce certain possible views." Anything that focuses the popular mind on a disorder—including "physician education" campaigns, public awareness efforts, and newsmagazine cover stories—ultimately helps a drug company move product.

Healy recounts how, during the 1960s, in promoting the antidepressant amitriptyline, "Merck marketed the concept of depression by buying and distributing 50,000 copies of [a] book on recognizing and treating depression in general medical settings." If doctors could be sensitized to signs of the disorder, the odds of their perceiving it in patients greatly increased. An example from more recent years is the industry's funding of a National Screening Day for social phobia and other anxiety disorders. The annual event—officially sponsored by the ADAA—has grown to include more than 1,600 test sites. The ADAA boasts that, on a recent screening day, 76 percent of participants reported that "anxiety has interfered with [their] daily lives," while 51 percent were

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prompted to seek treatment.

In his book, Healy notes a pattern emerging in the field of psychiatric medicine: a relatively rare mental disorder is known to exist, a psychotropic drug is found to have an effect on the disorder, and, subsequently, the rates of diagnosis multiply exponentially. He charts this progression in the history of depression, panic disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and social phobia. "This is not to say that psychiatrists or drug companies are just making up mental disorders," says Dr. Carl Elliott, an associate professor at the University of Minnesota's Center for Bioethics. "They're out there. But the boundaries are very fuzzy. And when there's money to be made with a psychoactive drug, there's suddenly all this interest in making these borders expand."

> *"Yes, 'Everybody's happy nowadays.'... But wouldn't you like to be free to be happy in some other way, Lenina? In your own way, for example; not in everybody else's way."*

MOST MENTAL HEALTH professionals stress the enormous difference between social phobia and run-of-the-mill insecurities. "It's more than just shyness" has become something of a mantra for the APA. But trying to differentiate a "mild" case of social phobia from "normal" shyness is like trying to nail Jell-O to the wall. Ross suggests that a socially phobic person is one so anxiety-ridden that he actually avoids certain situations. Not according to the DSM-III-R (or the DSM-IV, for that matter). Liebowitz, meanwhile, says everything exists on a spectrum. "It's a definitional issue. Social phobia is severe shyness to the point of real subjective distress or impairment, where it really begins to interfere with a person's life or they feel miserable about it."

Thus, the distinction between shyness and mental illness is now largely a matter of what each individual (or each individual's doctor) considers "significant distress" and how closely an individual's perception of her personality conforms with her perception of what it should be. If you are content to live as a hermit, communicating with the outside world only over the Internet, you are not socially phobic. If you are a basically gregarious person who goes to pieces at the prospect of 200 strangers dissecting your every word during a presentation, you are a candidate for treatment—assuming, of course, that your fear "bothers" you.

The assertion that social phobia is not "just shyness" suggests a bright dividing line that simply does not exist. In their heart of hearts, most people know that shyness—no matter how maddening—is not a disorder. But social phobia, we are warned repeatedly, is something completely different. It is not normal. If you have it, you need help. And, if one out of every eight Americans is plagued by this disorder, the odds that you have it are pretty good, aren't they? Even if you don't, wouldn't it be great to have that extra pharmacological edge? Science cannot determine the precise point at which a person's shyness is too "normal" to be affected by drugs. Medication may have an effect on people across the board, says Liebowitz. "But it's probably not worth it until someone's at the point where he's distressed or impaired," he adds.

But, just as the advent of Prozac prompted droves of moderately angst-ridden yuppies to try to medicate their way to contentment, there will be more than a few people who see social phobia drugs as a way to boost their confidence and interpersonal skills—the chemical equivalent of a motivational workshop with Dale Carnegie or Tony Robbins. Nor does the Prozac experience suggest that we can necessarily rely on doctors to carefully evaluate each individual before scribbling out a prescription. In the age of managed care, much of the appeal of psychopharmacology is that it's quicker, cheaper, and less labor-intensive than actually spending time with patients—and hence more likely to be fully covered by insurance. More and more, psychiatrists are fading from the picture as drug sales reps "educate" general practitioners and internists on how to recognize and treat (i.e., medicate) mental disorders.

NONE OF THIS is to suggest that some people aren't suffering. Certainly there are those who have a debilitating fear of social interaction. They rarely leave their homes. They cannot attend school or hold down a job. Dating is an impossibility. But for the mental health establishment and drug companies to push the notion that more than 35 million Americans are adrift on a sea of morbid shyness strains the limits of plausibility. More likely, this "epidemic" represents yet another step in the culture's crusade to medicalize any trait—physical or behavioral—that does not measure up to the elusive ideals generated by pop culture, advertising, and shifting moral and political norms. And the more people buy into these culturally defined ideals, the less tolerant we become of those who don't.

"There's definitely a very culturally relative aspect in how shameful it's seen to be shy," says the University of Minnesota's Elliott. "People in America seem to regard shyness as a big social handicap. We write self-help books about overcoming your shyness—which strikes my Chinese and Japanese friends as very strange.... In America, we tend to assume that the natural tendency of people is to be outgoing." Indeed, one wonders how much of the nation's social phobia epidemic stems from our growing sense that everyone should be aggressive, be assertive, and strive for the limelight. Forget the life of quiet contemplation. We are a society that glorifies celebrities and celebrates in-your-face personalities such as Jesse "The Body" Ventura. For a shot at their 15 minutes of fame, Jane and Joe Schmoe are lining up to expose even the most degrading or banal aspects of their personal lives to public scrutiny via Jerry Springer, the Internet, and "America's Funniest Home Videos." Increasingly, we have little admiration—or patience—for those who don't reach out and grab life by the throat. And if we have to put one-eighth of the population on expensive medication to bring them into line, then so be it. ■

> *"O brave new world that has such people in it."*

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

French Designers

THESE DAYS A new film by Eric Rohmer brings with it the fragrance of nostalgia, of film history. Rohmer is one of the few surviving active directors of the French New Wave that so invigorated the film world in the 1950s and 1960s. Born in the early 1920s (he is shifty about the precise date), he is ten years older than most of the others in that group. Not only is he still active, but his latest work ranks high in his long list of pictures.

Autumn Tale (October) reasserts with splendid flourish Rohmer's cardinal principle of art: design. What a headache or nuisance—or, possibly, amusement—he must be to the priests of postmodernism, particularly in France. Postmodernism rests a good deal of its case on its enmity to narrative design, assailing its "credibility," trumpeting that design is the fruit of intellectual and artistic detritus from the past. No, replies Rohmer quietly, humorously, even poignantly, design is an independent truth.

This is not, at least not visibly, because he is a Catholic. More patently, his films revel in intricacy of design less as belief than as pronouncement of power. The very power to conceive design, Rohmer implies, is a chief clarity in the chaos of existence. In the midst of that chaos, which all artists recognize and in which postmodernists exult, some artists can at least imagine an alternative. Credibility is not the only criterion: possibility is another. To Rohmer, it is not the probability of his design that he promotes as much as a conviction that the power to conceive intelligent design helps to beat back the dark. This belief applies even in the small-scale story of his new film.

Rohmer likes to work in clusters. (Another warrant of design.) He has made some "single" pictures—*Perceval* and the exquisite *Marquise of O.*—but his first six features were grouped as *Six Moral Tales*, and now he finishes another group, *Tales of the Four Seasons*. With this new film, we are immediately aware that once again Rohmer has enlisted landscape as contributor—not as calendar art but as testimony to dailiness. A few years ago I was being taken in a taxi through Dingle by an Irish driver, and I asked her how it felt to spend day after day amidst all this beauty. She said, "I pay it no mind." She wasn't dull-witted; she *lived* there. So do Rohmer's characters—in the valley of the Rhone. (Only once we hear some mention of the countryside, a complaint about power lines.)

The autumnal title has a double meaning: it is harvest time in the Rhone vineyard country, and the four principal characters are at an age when the reality of winter comes into view. Isabelle has a bookshop in Montélimar and lives in the country nearby (with a husband who is irrelevant to the story). Magali, her friend, is a widow who runs a vineyard in the vicinity, Étienne is a professor of philosophy at a local university, and Gérald is a local businessman. Both women have grown children who are pointedly included in the goings-on but are not pivotal.

Magali is very much interested in remarrying, but she lives in the country and meets no one who is possible. Isabelle, who loves her friend, puts a personal ad in the local paper, seeking a suitable man. Gérald, a widower, answers the ad; he meets Isabelle, who doesn't immediately reveal that she is only scouting for a friend. Complications and resolution of the design are best left to the film.

Béatrice Romand, whose first Rohmer appearance was in *Claire's Knee* (1970) and who has since been in four more Rohmer pictures, makes Magali proud and moody, with spurts of hot feeling. Marie Rivière, who has appeared for Rohmer three previous times, gives Isabelle a frisky dignity. Didier Sandre, the Étienne, and Alain Libolt, the Gérald, are highly experienced theater actors who endow their roles with resource.

These excellent people fulfill one of the subtlest elements in the Rohmer design: they converse beautifully. My French is pathetic, but with the subtitles I—or anyone—can savor Rohmer's language and can sense that he is insisting, as so many French dramatists have done, on articulated thought and the swirl of the completed sentence as part of the purpose of existence. The flavors of the language, woven with the choreography of the story, make *Autumn Tale* pure pleasure.

Design—in France, at any rate—exists at several levels. One of them, which can be as polished as a Rohmer design but is more profanely intended, is farce. A leading French farce-devisor of the day is Francis Veber, who writes and directs farcical plays, makes his plays into films, and then often sees his films remade in America. Among the many such was the film that Billy Wilder remade as *Buddy, Buddy*.

Here, in its second incarnation, is Veber's **The Dinner Game** (Lions Gate), which began in the French theater, is now a French film, and is reportedly to be remade in the United States. Its hallmark is workmanship. It gives us the feeling that Veber went to a spotlessly clean workbench, laid out some gleaming tools, set down a situation that could be developed, developed it, and will rejoice in its further development.

All you need to do for farce is to select a fertile base, slant it, then build in a perfectly straight line. When, as a boy, I first heard of the Leaning Tower of Pisa, I thought it had been built straight and then had leaned; but I read later that it had begun to lean very soon after the builders started it. Yet they kept on! Those builders were born *farceurs*.

Pierre Brochant is a Parisian smoothie. He and equivalent friends hold a dinner party once in a while with some boring, banal guests who don't know that they have been invited just because they are boring and banal. The hosts are quietly chuckling the whole time, and later they crow about their guests' insipidity. (The French title was *Le diner de cons.*) François Pignon is one such guest, a man who builds models of towers and bridges out of matchsticks and can tell you exactly how many matchsticks he used in each one. Pignon goes to Brochant's apartment in order to be escorted to the dinner; but the two men never get there. Thereby hangs this particular tale.

Since almost all the action takes place in Brochant's apartment—and originally, I'm sure, never went elsewhere—it is easy to see the theater origins of the piece. In a way, this only increases our applause for its ingenuity. Veber, as director of the film, doesn't fret much about limitations in space: he exploits them, inviting us to admire his dexterity. His two principal actors are flawless. Thierry Lhermitte, as Brochant, creates a smart man, increas-

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ingly irritated because he is increasingly trapped in a web that he himself put in place. Jacques Villeret, who originated Pignon on stage, has a rubicund innocence that makes him appealing even at his most foolish. Occasionally the whole piece is either more or less than clever; mostly, it is clever. ■

Robert Brustein on Theater

The Season of the Play

YOU CAN ALWAYS count on the Tony Award ceremonies to demonstrate how theater people can make modesty synonymous with vanity. In this regard at least, last month's festivities were no different than ever. There was the customary parade to the podium of tear-stained luminaries, unspeakably moved by themselves, thanking their partners, their agents, and God for this recognition of their talents; the traditional prescripted celebrity banter interrupted by the usual embarrassed struggles with the vagaries of the teleprompter; the inevitable backstage bickering over who got cut out of the program by time constraints. In the face of so much covert self-congratulation, how refreshing it was to hear Martin Short, accepting a prize for Best Leading Man in a Musical, confess, "The reality is, I did it all myself."

But in one important sense, this year was different. As David Hare put it—and he ought to know, having had three of his own performed on Broadway in this one season—"straight plays are once more attracting huge and enthusiastic audiences." This may be because they are also attracting a larger share of Hollywood stars—among them Brian Dennehy in *Death of a Salesman*, Kevin Spacey in *The Iceman Cometh*, and Christian Slater in *Side Man*. Whatever the reason, the Tony Committee celebrated "the season of the play" by focusing not just on the big thumping musical, as in the past, but also on some very deserving new plays and revivals, including two genuine American masterpieces, *The Iceman Cometh* and *Death of a Salesman*. Arthur Miller even received a Lifetime Achievement Award, using the occasion to scold the "powers that be" for their traditional timidity regarding serious drama.

The straight play's renewed purchase on the soil of the commercial New York theater is a welcome development, provided it is lasting. Welcome, too, is the renewed respect being displayed by the commercial theater for such long-ignored theatrical icons as Miller, O'Neill, and Tennessee Williams. And also to be welcomed is the return of seasoned Hollywood actors to the medium that first sharpened their talents. Still, despite the modest run of *Side Man*, which won a Tony award for Best New Play, the new American play is still a rarity on Broadway. To see what our native playwrights are capable of producing these days, you really have to go to a resident nonprofit theater. In New York, that means off Broadway, often one of the numerous small theaters housed on Forty-Second street between Eighth and Eleventh Avenues.

Richard Nelson's **Goodnight Children Everywhere** recently closed after struggling for survival in one of those houses, Playwrights Horizons. It deserved a longer run. Nelson's work is notable for the very thing that makes him relatively unappreciated: the lack of a singular, easily identified style. At curtain rise, *Goodnight Children Everywhere* looks very unprepossessing: a dreary hearth and home, dank wallpaper, overstuffed furniture. The setting is South London just after the conclusion of World War II. Three women are on stage, fixing their hair, reflecting on the past, awaiting the return of an absent brother. It looks as if we are in for a gray reworking of *Three Sisters* in modern dress.

What transpires after these opening minutes, however, is quite unexpected. The brother Peter (Chris Stafford), still in his teens, is returning home after having sat out the war with many other English children in Canada; his pregnant sister Ann (Kali Rocha) is unhappily married to a much older man. Before we know it, she is admiring his naked body in the bath, stroking his member, and bringing him to climax with her hand. Instead of a reworking of *Three Sisters*, the play begins to look more like an Ealing Studios version of *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* set in Clapham.

For the brother and the sister not only fall in love with each other, they also seem altogether unembarrassed about displaying their feelings in front of their two other siblings. One of these girls, Vi (Heather Goldenhersh), is an actress who sleeps with directors in order to further her movie career. The other, Betty (Robin Weigert), is a nurse who is dating a man whom she detests. The entire family is unfulfilled and, as the play progresses, it seems to be breaking into pieces. This process of disintegration, partly an inheritance of their dysfunctional dead parents, partly a result of the war, creates a pervasive atmosphere of abandoned hopes and lost innocence, further embodied in the sweet children's lullaby that gives the play its title. By the end of the evening, Ann, having given birth to her baby, has returned to her husband, and Peter is sleeping with a teenage tart, and Betty and Vi are left in various degrees of stiff-upper-lip hopelessness.

All of this is written, directed (by the playwright), and acted with the quiet intensity of those earnest British movies of the '40s and '50s, the ones that used to star actors such as John Mills and Valerie Hobson. This makes the incestuous subject matter all the more startling. Like the Jacobean dramatist John Ford, Richard Nelson has the capacity to make you sympathize with brother-and-sister love. But unlike Ford, he doesn't try to turn incest into an expression of rebellion against a corrupt and godless world. Nelson simply reports it as a post-war event. *Goodnight Children Everywhere*, taking place in such a drab daylight world, lacks the pith and power of a major play, but it does embody the inner integrity of a major play, and so do the acting and the direction.

Also just closed on Forty-Second Street, in a production of the Foundry Theatre (using the rented space of the Signature Theatre), **Gertrude and Alice: A Likeness to Loving** is an effort to replicate the celebrated lesbian relationship between Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas. It was performed by two somewhat less well-known lesbian partners, Lola Pashalinski and Linda Chapman, who also compiled the text that Anne Bogart directed. You could find the presentation honest, sincere, occasionally touching, and ultimately either mildly engaging or very tedious, depending on your attitude toward Gertrude Stein's treatment of the English language.

My own tolerance for Stein's prose being low, the intermissionless one-and-a-half-hour evening passed very slowly for me, though I couldn't help admiring the effort that went into it. Myung Hee Cho's setting

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tries to capture the style of modernist and postmodernist art—geometric Mondrian patterns colored in blue, green, and white, a metallic Robert Wilson-type chair beside a Robert Wilson-like table, two alcoves harboring real objects such as a red handbag and a leopard cap, and a white pedestal. When the lights come up, Stein (Pashalinski) is standing at this pedestal, while Toklas (Chapman) is seated in the chair with a handkerchief draped over her head. Borrowed from the opening of *Endgame*, this image is repeated throughout the play, for reasons that escaped me. Perhaps it was an effort to provide some visual relief from the relentless assault of the language.

"Bread is the staff of life," Stein opined, "and so are words." But the dough in Stein's bread fails to rise, and the staff seems limited to a single register. Stein's style has often been characterized as the verbal equivalent of Picasso's painting or Satie's music. Listening to it spoken aloud over a sustained period of time, it struck me as being more akin to the nonsense verses of Lewis Carroll or the rakish lyrics of W.S. Gilbert, whose light operas may have been her greatest influence. Stein's writing is certainly constructed of similar internal assonances and end-rhymes ("She is my bride and more beside," "Please beget, please get wet,"), the same kind of verbal epigrams and witticisms ("I dreamt that I dwelt in velvet and felt"), the same absurd punning disjunctions ("A doorway is a photograph and a photograph is a sight").

Stein's brother Leo believed her to be not an artist but a dilettante, and there were quite a few who agreed with him. Stein herself, who had an inflated sense of her own importance, was obviously not among them. "I make so much absorbing literature with such attractive titles," she crowed, boasting that "I realize that of English literature in my time, I'm the only one," and adding that "I happen to be the first American since Whitman who is writing literature." Her friends Hemingway and Joyce might have had different thoughts on the matter.

Ultimately, through all the arcane language and self-adulation, the outlines of a relationship—a very talky relationship—begin to emerge. Stein is the husband, Toklas is the wife. Each is extremely jealous of the other's previous intimacies. "Didn't Nelly and Lilly love you?" Stein asks incessantly, while Toklas goes into paroxysms about Stein's strong feelings—thirty years earlier!—for Mabel Dodge. In order to placate her, Stein decides to write Toklas's autobiography—the story of all those years in Paris. And when this turns into an unexpected success, she embarks on a lecture tour in America.

Wearing the leopard-skin cap that Leo gave her, from which she refuses to be parted, Stein takes three rooms in the Algonquin and basks in the admiration of her disciples. She has her photograph taken for smart magazines. She goes to Chicago to see for the first time *Four Saints in Three Acts*, the opera that she wrote with Virgil Thomson. But the tension between husband and wife is revived when Mabel Dodge calls Stein again. Stein wants to forget, Toklas wants to remember. Neither can escape the past. Back in Paris after three years' absence, Stein writes *The Making of Americans*, telling Toklas that "I do love none but you." Toklas responds by sitting down in her chair again and putting the handkerchief over her head.

The piece has its poignant moments, and it is nicely acted by Pashalinski, looking very much like the Picasso portrait of Stein, and by Chapman, with her saucer eyes, rosy cheeks, page-boy haircut, and plastic features. Anne Bogart works tirelessly to provide some visual distraction from the endless palaver. And her choice of musical background is always sensitive. Still, what *Gertrude and Alice* manages to demonstrate most tellingly is how lesbian domestic relationships can be just as banal as those between married heterosexuals. And in this case, a lot more windy. ■

Mindy Aloff on Dance
After the Last Tango

EVERY FALL, in a New York City-wide event organized by Pierre Dulaine and Yvonne Marceau (co-founders of American Ballroom Theater), teams of trained ballroom dancers—amateurs all—compete for prizes in various dance categories before the scrutiny of celebrity judges. This year, they danced for Broadway star Sandy Duncan, Tony Award-winning choreographers Patricia Birch and Graciela Daniele, the beloved Marge Champion—who, with her late husband, Gower, made up one of the most successful ballroom partnerships in movie history—and Jim Bouton, known to sports fans for his baseball and to the dance world as a diligent ballroom dancer. The prize categories are Merengue, Fox-Trot, Rumba, and Tango.

I have seen a couple of these competitions, and they are intoxicating. Regardless of the dancers' abilities, which vary considerably, the enthusiasm is universally high, and the concentration on the dance universally intense. For the contestants, the tango seems particularly demanding, not so much owing to its complexity—they do a rather simplified version—but to its tone, which is at once cool and hot, romantic and realistic. The dancers are asked to be something that is not quite themselves as they are, to imagine and then to project, on the musical counts, some version of interior darkness and swaddled emotion. It is a challenge even for adult *tangueros*.

And these contestants are not adults: they are fifth and sixth graders, representing a variety of public schools and one or two parochial schools in New York City. Nearly everything they know about these dances has come to them through practice in weekly classes, conducted by members of American Ballroom Theater. Dulaine, Marceau, and their colleagues have faith that the right steps, coordinated with the right music, will necessarily transmit the genetics of a dance. In the case of the tango—which, with the English quickstep, is one of the two most advanced partnered ballroom dances in the world—those genetics are so complex, and have been so exhaustively studied and described, that if there were a University of the Dance it would have to establish a Tango Studies department to accommodate them. But all the children know is that this dance, lovely and smooth with slight hesitations and occasional dramatic lunges or dips, is a little restrained or sad. One day, they will see much more in it, if they are lucky enough to find it still being spoken as a living language.

At the moment, it seems safe to say that they will. For the past decade, owing to the overwhelming international success of several world tours by the revue "Tango Argentino," ballroom dancers from Seattle to Seoul have been caught up in a tango craze, in particular for the variety known as the Argentine tango: a walking dance in one of three time signatures (4/4 for the tango proper, 2/4 for the milonga, 3/4 for the tango waltz) that is marked by periods of unnerving consistency interrupted by unpredictable hesitations, intricate footwork, and, in its most accomplished

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incarnations, by a quality of feral tension—something between a prey's apprehension and a predator's alertness—that sets it apart from any other kind of ballroom dancing.

It is intended to be performed to music with accents that give what Tioma Maloratsky (who, with Viviana Párra, comprises one of New York's most beguiling tango partnerships) calls a "swing," a lilt, that lightens the steps and lends the dance a feeling, more or less, of play. Tango dancers who are held up as standards of excellence by other tango dancers all demonstrate this playfulness: the fluent and witty cast of Tango X 2's "*Una Noche de Tango*" revue, or the prodigiously talented dancer-choreographer Pablo Pugliese, still in his early twenties, who gave several informal demonstrations in New York last year while he was a visiting student at the School of American Ballet.

A beginning student of Argentine tango, as it is practiced in dance halls and tango bars rather than on the stage, quickly understands where this tension comes from: all the intricacy and the unpredictability are spontaneous, improvised by the partners on the spot, according to their knowledge of hundreds and perhaps thousands of figures that are theoretically available and to their practical experience of what is available for them at any given moment. Improvisation of this rarefied order is only possible, of course, if both partners also think ahead several moves, which, as they play them out, they may have to change instantaneously, depending upon what the other person does. The Argentine tango is frequently compared to chess; and although its cerebral dimension is hardly the first thing most people associate with a dance that was born in the brothels of Buenos Aires, it is exactly this dimension that attracts its most extraordinary practitioners.

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM MRS. GLADYS BEATRICE CROZIER, "THE TANGO AND HOW TO DANCE IT," LONDON, 1913 COURTESY THAMES AND HUDSON

In fact, the most ironic aspect of the tango at this point in its evolution is that although it conveys the image of male dominance and female submissiveness, it cannot be performed well unless both the leader and the follower are matched in their abilities to imagine long sequences of steps moment by moment, and to cope harmoniously with sudden change. The tremendous challenges that it offers to a dancer in the follower's role, especially in comparison with other ballroom dances, may be what attracts to it women with a solid background in classical ballet. In Maloratsky's words, "If the man does not follow the woman a little, he's not a great dancer. The man cannot lead her properly if she doesn't define her place on the floor."

In her entry on tango for the new *International Encyclopedia of Dance*, the Argentinian anthropologist María Susana Azzi has composed what may be the most concise and richly informed paragraph on the subject in English:

> The tango is a dance of embrace, meaning that the woman dances in the man's arms (the embrace is borrowed from the waltz). Although the man is the engine that generates the movement—he leads—the work of the dance is shared equally by the man and the woman. Always moving counterclockwise, the man walks the tango, indicating the figures and the poses by gently pressing his right hand against the woman's back. With an attitude that is creative and active rather than passive or submissive, the woman intuits the movements her partner desires. She plays and adorns with her feet and must know how to turn and twirl. If the male dancer does not walk the tango, he does not dance it. If he only makes figures, he cannot pause, which is when the woman plays. If the man's role is more difficult because he leads, the woman must be a good solo dancer, to capture the movement in movement but bridle it when tempering is needed. The man proposes, and the woman offers counterproposals. The posture, the embrace, and the ability to place one's foot "just so" defines the good dancer. When danced slowly, simply, and elegantly, "the tango," as Jorge Luis Borges has written, "is a way of walking."

And how one walks matters, too. Several years ago, Richard Powers of Stanford University, an authority on vintage dance, conducted a workshop in early-twentieth-century tango styles (Argentinian, Parisian) in New York, and to give a notion of the tango's gliding stride he used the following analogy: "Imagine you're blind, and the floor is full of cracks and crevices. If you were going to step, you might bend down to feel the floor before you did. I want to make your feet as sensitive as your hands." When Danel and Maria, who are among New York's leading teachers of tango, teach beginners, they, too, emphasize the care with which a step is taken, like a bare foot on hot sand.

Every detail of every variety of the tango has been subjected by its leading practitioners, teachers, and historians to such analysis, and I am speaking merely of the dance action. The best popular overview, in English, of the larger cultural phenomenon is contained in the lavishly illustrated and eminently readable volume *¡Tango!: The Dance, the Song, the Story*, by a team consisting of Azzi, the historian of Hispanic culture Simon Collier, the writer Artemis Cooper, and the head curator at the Costume Institute of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Richard Martin. One of their themes is the use of the tango in the movies, from the dancing of Rudolph Valentino in *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* in 1921 to Ken Russell's biopic *Valentino* in 1977, which includes a scene showing the protagonist (Rudolph Nureyev) teaching the tango to Vaslav Nijinsky (Anthony Dowell). As the authors also observe, the tango was central to the Argentine film industry: the first films that featured the dance were all made in Argentina during World War I, beginning with *El tango de la muerte* in 1917. The first commercial sound film in Argentina was *¡Tango!* in 1933, which recorded performances by popular musicians and dancers of the period.

Had you visited St. Petersburg in Russia between 1910 and 1916, you would have found a tangomania so pervasive that it affected the country's classical actors and nascent film industry at the most profound level of influence: rhythm and timing. On the eve of the First World War in Russia, the tango was typically performed in late-night cabarets, where it was associated with theatrical vampire shows and Grand Guignol "dances of death." Artists and intellectuals of all media were attracted by it, and, in one way or another, exploited its love-and-death imagery and its erotic hot-cold manner.

Still, as Yuri Tsivian recently noted in

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his essay "The Tango in Russia" in the journal *Experiment*, the dance was most closely associated with actors, even more than with dancers. Tsivian traces to its popularity the cinematic practice that has become identified with Russian acting and film directing: long stillnesses of the actor or the camera, suddenly interrupted by a jagged motion or a quick cut. It is the dynamic of a frozen world suddenly shattered. Analogies to larger political upheavals are nearly irresistible.

As with most international crazes, this one eventually lost steam outside its native culture. By 1933, the dawn of the tango's "Golden Age" in Argentina, Hollywood was relocating it to Sunset Boulevard. In *Flying Down to Rio*, a movie musical steeped in Latin rhythms, the tango, sedate and stand-offish, is what an obliging Fred Astaire is forced to do with Dolores Del Rio. When he cuts loose, with Ginger Rogers, it is in quite another mode, a kind of hyperoxygenated samba. Six years later Astaire would be performing the tango with Rogers as a museum piece in *The Story of Vernon and Irene Castle*. Their recreation of a Castle palm-court tango, circa 1914, is exquisite, although Astaire's gaucho costume seems to viewers today to make mock of it. (His unflattering costume was historically correct, both for Vernon Castle and for less well-known Argentine *milongueros* who, prior to World War I, performed the tango professionally in Paris, where by law they had to adopt their national dress.)

SO A GREAT DEAL of film stock had been exposed by 1972, when Bernardo Bertolucci and his cinematographer Vittorio Storaro gave the tango a stunning jolt with *Last Tango in Paris*, the fatalistic account of a liaison between strangers played by Marlon Brando and Maria Schneider. Bertolucci and Storaro had already demonstrated a fascination with the dance in *The Conformist* (1970), the story of a man in 1930s Italy who is drawn into upper-class Fascism, in which the tango is danced, with lesbian overtones, by two wealthy women (Dominique Sanda and Stefania Sandrelli) as a provocative gesture in the working-class milieu of a country dance-hall. We are meant to see it as a sign of contempt as well as glamour, and perhaps as a sign, too, of the sleep of reason: a simultaneous exhibition of social arrogance and moral poverty. Indeed, Bertolucci's link between the tango and Fascism may have had historical underpinnings. As *¡Tango!* recounts, "concentration camp orchestras favored the tango.... The Nazis approved of it because it engendered no spirit of rebellion, unlike the African-American jazz that they so abhorred and interdicted."

In *The Conformist*, the tango is taken seriously as dancing. But in *Last Tango in Paris*, the dance in the title—a homage to movies and plays with similar names from the early part of the century—is introduced to be ridiculed, parodied, and finally smashed into smithereens. This is accomplished in a variety of ways. The dancers are photographed close up, in detail rather than in full figure. The photography of the dancing is edited into bits and pieces, which destroys any theatrical effects that the performers might produce. Emphasis is placed on torsos and rigidly held profiles, which, in close-up, look pompous against the more cinematically attractive languor of Schneider and the scabrous antics of Brando, playing her frustrated suitor, as the two slide onto the floor for a drunken tango satire that shocks the judge.

The point seems to be that the Brando and Schneider figures are *living* the tango, which, in the movie's moral hierarchy, makes their imperious treatment of actual tango dancers a code for their largeness of soul. We are in the world of *The Conformist*, transposed to the realm of sexual politics—an evolution reinforced by the most charming scene in the movie, when the Brando character, on his exhilarated way to an assignation with the Schneider character, breaks into a soft-shoe routine. It tells us not only of his anticipation, but also of his American origins and the spirit of independence that the film treasures in them.

If you are inside Bertolucci's logic, his treatment of the tango makes a semblance of sense; but its elevation of an idea about dancing at the expense of the facts of a dance continues to aggravate even other filmmakers. In the nearly three decades since *Last Tango*'s release, a number of films have attempted to redress the balance. The usual tack is to try to slip in some hard-headed dance information. Ettore Scola's idiosyncratically wordless *Le Bal* (1982), which traces the history of a small Parisian ballroom over four and a half decades, knowledgeably links the tango to the bullying imagery of Apache dancing, as it was once linked in Paris early in the century. Maria Novaro's *Danzón* (1991), a fable about a woman who searches for love through dancing, focuses on the partnered dance of the title—a gentle Caribbean and Mexican relation of the tango, which shares its ballroom protocol, some of its melodrama, and its partnering embrace or, as ballroom dancers say, "frame," derived from European contradanse and the waltz. Novaro's respect for her subject goes so deep that she includes a scene in which one character patiently teaches another—and the audience—the rudiments of the dance; and it is the most interesting moment in the movie. *The Tango Lesson* (1997), by Sally Potter, is devoted to the subject of how one woman, an amusingly neurasthenic director of arty feature films, melts her creative block and flares into true love by learning how to dance the Argentine tango at a rather advanced level, mostly in its off-stage, salon version, where the choreography is improvised on the spot. Her principal teacher and amusingly neurotic love interest (as well as the film's choreographer) is Pablo Veron, a mesmerizing and versatile dancer, who can knock off variations on Fred Astaire's "Shine on Your Shoes" number from *The Band Wagon* and Gene Kelly's title solo in *Singin' in the Rain* as easily as he can complicate the figures of an exhibition tango duet.

CARLOS SAURA'S RECENT *Tango* concerns one man, a film director (played by Miguel Ángel Solá, who bears an uncanny resemblance here to Frank Sinatra), recovering from a broken leg and a broken love affair. He cracks his creative block, and finds smashing true love in the person of one of his dancers (Mia Maestro, bearing an uncanny resemblance to Suzanne Farrell), by immersing himself in the movie that he is trying to make about the history of the tango in Argentina over the past 125 years—to the extent that he moves from his apartment into a bed on the set.

Tango's script, written by Saura, can be creakily didactic, with bluntly allegorical connections drawn between the off-stage travails of the characters and the onstage images of the tango's evolution through time. Even so, the film does acquire considerable glamour through its concentration on the dance as a theatrical phenomenon, its virtuosity necessarily choreographed to precise counts in advance of performance. Stage tangos require more

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clear space than salon tangos do, as they tend to feature acrobatic lifts, exaggerated dips, and repeated daggering flicks of the foot by one partner between the legs of the other. Theatrical *milongueras* also frequently dance in heels that can be as high as five inches. The shoes look as if they might do damage, and *Tango* shows that they certainly can: during one rehearsal scene, a female dancer is actually caught by the camera as she misjudges the distance between herself and her partner, jabbing her spike into his calf.

This goes by in an eyeblink, and seems to just be a little cinematic joke; but most of the dancing in the film is deadly accurate as well as vital. Saura has assembled some of most brilliant stage dancers in Argentina, including the fireball Cecilla Narova, and they are given plenty of eye-popping material to perform to the commissioned score by Lalo Schifrin. Their choreography is by Carlos Rivarola, Ana María Stekelman, and Juan Carlos Copes, the principal choreographer for the international stage hit "Tango Argentino" and, debatably, the greatest living choreographer in any genre of ballroom dancing. (Saura, who seems to have been working on a far more extravagant budget than Potter, also managed to snare Copes in a supporting role: he impersonates a version of himself, a master choreographer-dancer with a hard twinkle in his eye, like the one that Léonide Massine plays in *The Red Shoes*.)

Among Saura's teaching points in bringing together so many expert Argentinian dancers is that the tango is not only the country's national dance form, but also its national philosophy of social dynamics. To call attention to its aggressive and tragic dimensions—the elements that Potter, through some very delicate and intricate finessing, managed to defang and to domesticate—Saura has included a couple of dances that examine the subterranean military implications of a stalking dance which, executed with locked knees, becomes a goosestep. Julio Bocca, the Argentinian classicist who is a principal with American Ballet Theater, participates in an all-male tango; and during a duet, he provocatively assumes the follower's role, the one more usually taken by a woman—not an image of a dictatorship in itself, yet intentionally unsettling. It is followed by a sequence concerning the plans for, and rehearsal of, an unmistakably horrific tango ballet about the tortures and the political murders that took place in Argentina during the 1970s under the military dictatorship: here, such tango movements as the hook and the dip—directly related on screen to images from Goya's *Disasters of War*—acquire a sickening, extra-theatrical meaning.

THEIR DIFFERENCES notwithstanding, these two movies are united in their head-on criticism of the moral priorities of *Last Tango in Paris*. In these films, love triumphs at the end, and its victory is a direct result of the technical detail and the connoisseurship expended on the dancing and on its presentation to the audience. *The Tango Lesson*, dedicated to Potter's late father, is a more personal film than *Tango*; and it painstakingly shows how the dance can evolve from a plain stalking walk to an elaborately ornamented sprint, open to a multitude of rhythmic and kinetic complications. *Tango* names steps and patterns for us (*sentada*, *parada*); distinguishes the tango from its closely related, lilting antecedent, the *milonga*; and distinguishes each of these from the tango waltz—while simultaneously attempting to suggest how they looked in the context of nineteenth-century immigrant Buenos Aires, Paris of the Jazz Age, and so forth.

Unlike Bertolucci, who equates creativity with the uncontrollable acting-out of iconoclastic impulses, Potter and Saura consistently associate creative flow with the expert tango dancer's ability to play with symbolic nuances, such as the difference between machoism and masculinity, or between masochism and femininity—an ability only possible after the dance vocabulary and style have been mastered—while remaining sufficiently detached from the fantasies that they project to be able to reproduce them nightly at curtain time. The melodramas of lust and betrayal that tango songs harbor are either miniaturized (by Potter) to emotional power plays in an ongoing relationship or translated theatrically (by Saura) into a kind of living newspaper about history and culture.

The common mission appears to be righting Bertolucci's wrong through some high-toned audience education. Early in her movie, Potter removes the locale from Paris (where the tango lessons are spotty and stilted) to Buenos Aires (where the lessons are ongoing, intense, and steeped in verisimilitude). At another point, when Potter and Veron are in different cities, he is shown in the bathtub, reading a biography of Brando, while she is shown in bed, reading her deadpan riposte to *Last Tango*: Martin Buber's *I and Thou*. Saura sets his film entirely in Buenos Aires, and, as his cinematographer, he uses none other than Storaro, granting him a freedom to photograph the dancers in full figure—and a sensitive editing of these dance passages—that, in *Last Tango*, he did not enjoy.

NEITHER *THE TANGO LESSON* nor *Tango*, by design, attempts to rival the sensationalism of *Last Tango in Paris*: the late-afternoon sex scenes, which, in their stalking caresses and spasmic hooks, translate the tango into terms so literally physical that nearly thirty years later they still inflame the screen. This is truly tango dancing among strangers; as in the dance hall, where the dancers customarily change partners, sometimes without speaking, Bertolucci's characters know and do not know one another intimately. They have mapped one another's orifices, but they have not told one another their names. As Brando's character falls in love with Schneider's, he starts to speak more (in this movie intimacy is reserved almost exclusively for afterglow conversation), and, eventually, to wear his clothes in her presence longer. His ultimate confession of love, that is, saying the words "I love you," triggers her own murderous impulses, effecting a result that could reasonably send a person susceptible to cinematic suggestion into a lifelong vow of chastity.

Sex and violence: *Last Tango* weds them in shots set up so that, while one activity is taking place, the audience is helplessly—one might even say punitively—led to recall the other. The price that it pays for its primal suspense is that it seems empty of everything else. Still, insofar as relations between men and women go, the line between sex and love is so decisively drawn that it is never crossed. Potter, especially, takes Bertolucci to task for this. In *The Tango Lesson*, the last tango, the ultimate wisdom, is to simplify the dance and to perform it very slowly, while kissing. Yet she pays a price, too: to effect her solution, she has managed to convert the tango into a waltz, or, perhaps more accurately, into the antecedent for the waltz, the *Ländler*. She has

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struck the bargain but she has not closed the deal.

Into this vacuum has swept *Happy Together*, a film that won its Hong Kong director-writer-producer Wong Kar-Wai the director's prize in 1997 at the Cannes Film Festival. Wong, working with the cinematographer Christopher Doyle, has constructed a breathless example of moviemaking: magical photography, surgically impeccable editing, committed acting (especially by Tony Leung and Leslie Cheung, as the young homosexual lovers whose trip from Hong Kong to Buenos Aires results in convulsions of intimacy and separation), and a screenplay without a false line in it. Although the tango, as a dance, is seen only in fleeting glimpses, its timing, its spirit, and the fundamental dynamic of its stalking walk, periodically interrupted by suspenseful pauses for the man and dazzling ornamentations for the woman, inform the entire movie, in terms of visual imagery and of plot development.

Of all the movies to challenge *Last Tango in Paris* on its own terms of radical separation between action and feeling, and its insistent identification of self-control with misery, *Happy Together* is the only one to score points on Bertolucci's turf. Its method of bolstering the messiness of life over the unreality of art is positively ingenious: it only offers fragments of actual tango dancing, but in those fragments the dance is always performed by the same partners, who have clearly been dancing together for a long time, and their bravura *ochos* and pirouettes, which they perform in a slot of space a little larger than a shoebox, have been choreographed to perfection by Juan Carlos Copes. When one man walks across a beach to rub the other's back in a loving yet chaste gesture, he adopts an unmistakable tango stride; yet Doyle frames the walker (that is, the leader) erotically, so that the audience sees only excerpts of his legs from the knees down. The audience is asked only to observe these characters, not to become them.

Looking at *Last Tango in Paris* recently, I momentarily entertained the thought that Bertolucci was a kind of cinéaste's Paul Taylor, the choreographer who is well known for his abiding interest in the Jekyll-and-Hyde duality of human nature. When I went back to the Taylor repertory, I found that I was wrong. Taylor believes in dance as a musical event, in theatrical magic achieved through exacting technical mastery, and (especially in his collaborations with filmmaker Matthew Diamond) in the presentation of dancing on film as a lavishly physical and sumptuously visceral experience. He would never belittle other dancers in order to elevate an amateur's parody. In fact, Taylor has made a dance on similar themes to *Last Tango in Paris*—the cataclysmically fraught and brutal "Last Look" in 1985—and part of what is so absorbing about its Max Beckmann-like depths of agony is that, as with Beckmann's interwar triptychs, its imagery of chaotic terrors has been planned out to a hair.

In 1997, Taylor choreographed his own tango ballet, "Piazzolla Caldera," to selections from a recording by Gidon Kremer of works by Astor Piazzolla, the Argentinian master of post-World War II tangos, and a work in homage to him by Jerzy Peterburshsky. Piazzolla, who died in 1992, was a student of Alberto Ginastera and Nadia Boulanger, and a connoisseur of progressive jazz. He had ambitions as a composer of concert music, and even his most famous bandstand tangos—such as the impassioned "Libertango," which was apparently written as a fist against the sky during the dark night of the generals in the 1970s—have a harmonic interest and a compositional complexity that set them apart from other tangos. They are meant for listening and can be very tricky to stage. This hasn't stopped many dancers: Piazzolla, who enjoys no entry in *Grove*, is so popular among choreographers of every theatrical background and national origin that, unless you see a show such as "Forever Tango" or "Tango X 2," you might not think that anyone else had ever written tangos.

For a high-profile modern-dance choreographer to invest himself in Piazzolla in the late 1990s is a tough test, and Taylor has come through with flying colors. "Piazzolla Caldera" is a wonderful dance. It goes by in a breath, its highs are memorable, its technical challenges to its cast include all kinds of extremes: of stamina, of speed, of slowness, of partnering.

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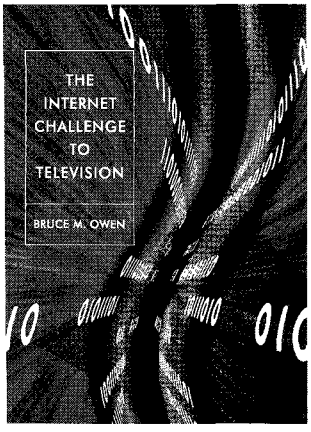

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The music that Taylor chose—Peterbursh-sky's *El Sol Sueno* and Piazzolla's *Concierto Para Quinteto*, *Celos*, and *Escualo*—have called forth from him choreography of a peculiarly symphonic weight and depth in the way the steps and the gestures relate to one another on the abstract levels of rhythm and theme-and-variation recurrence, a seriousness of craft that he underplays through the conventional setting of a dance hall, slyly designed by Santo Loquasto, and through the inclusion of melodramatic cameos involving, among other figures, a lovelorn wallflower, a *milonguero* who forms a ménage with two women, and two drunken *milongueros* whose acrobatic adagio of enmity and attraction is amazingly humanized, even sanctified, by its evolution, with the assistance of a second couple, into an orgy.

These commercial diversions can obscure the fact that Taylor has evoked the history and the lyric essence of the Argentine tango without using more than three actual tango steps at the most. He has done so by mischievously breaking one of the most suggestive unspoken rules of the dance: the aversion of eye contact between partners. At some moments in "Piazzolla Caldera," the mutual gaze between dancers is more penetrating and erotic than what they enact. Taylor invents changes of scene entirely through choreographic formations, which, in this dance, are obsessively based on an "X" form, a hieroglyph, perhaps, for the *corte*, whose variations he reworks on multiple levels—from its manifestation within the body, by one foot overlapping another, to the spelling of it on the floor, using the bodies of the entire cast of twelve. His sorcery as an author of dance images climaxes in the last section, when the cast momentarily transforms itself into the portal and the entrance hall of a tango bar, and then, one by one, become people again, disappearing into a doorway of air like a snake swallowing its own tail.

NEARLY EVERY GREAT theatrical choreographer I know of has created at least one tango. The one in Frederick Ashton's "Façade" adopts the mannerisms and the affectations of tango costumes. Some choreographers—Twyla Tharp, in the romantically imploding tango section in "Waterbabies," and Mark Morris, in the aeronautical tango solo featuring a bravura male classical dancer (originally Mikhail Baryshnikov) in "Drink to Me Only With Thine Eyes"—are abstract. An unwitting one by Marius Petipa—and, as it has come down to us, possibly later hands—was surely not intended as a contribution to the genre: still, the solo for the third Shade in the Vision Scene of *La Bayadère*, with its smoothly unfolding extensions that are suddenly arrested in poses fiendishly difficult to sustain without the appearance of effort, is a textbook example of how dramatic a *corte* can be, regardless of whether it is being performed with a human partner or an enveloping space, or whether it is pronounced in a lexicon that is French or Latin, or whether it is set to a score by Minkus or a song by Carlos Gardel.

Or whether it is being executed on ice. This past May, the Ice Theatre of New York gave the premiere of "Tango Images," an ice-dancing suite for figure skaters, set to a portion of the score for *The Tango Lesson*, which features a song by Sally Potter and the cello of Yo-Yo Ma. (Ma has also released a fine record of tango music.) The choreographer, Peter di Falco, who was last represented on a New York stage by a

tango suite for the American Ballroom Theater in 1992, noted in an interview that the Argentine tango, distinguished by the *corte*, would seem about as far as one could go from the essence of figure skating, as most viewers understand it: the poses held in long glides and the athletic revolutions in air. And yet di Falco, in collaboration with the cast, managed to maintain the hesitations of the dance, its elaborate footwork, and even the hooks between the legs, which, performed in ice skates, lend it a new kind of danger.

One doesn't see many tango solos outside the ballet. In proper tango revues, they are usually reserved for a male dancer at the beginning of the show, giving him the chance to demonstrate the tango stance and walk and—as at the recent, electric "TangoFest '99" at New York's Town Hall—to show the audience how the follower might be partnered, without the distraction of a live female (or male) follower, who might lead our thoughts away from the logistics of leading. Most of the time the demonstrator partners air, although in "TangoFest" he quite wittily used two broomsticks, thereby permitting him to engage the non-existent follower with some advanced hooks and other fancy footwork.

IN THIS VEIN of clownish imagination, one of the most subtle tangos that I have ever seen was "Tango," a simultaneous duet and solo that Merce Cunningham made for himself and a television set in 1978. (As David Vaughan wrote in *Merce Cunningham: Fifty Years*, "the television continued to play throughout; for a few moments the sound was turned up. But it didn't upstage him in the least, though he sometimes met stiff competition—once from a Laurel and Hardy movie, once from Fred Astaire himself.") Recently, in speaking of the tango in connection with "Piazzolla Caldera," Taylor observed that everything essential that he knew about the dance he learned from Cunningham, who once told Taylor that the tango consisted of "a slow move and then a real quick, abrupt one."

The Cunningham-Cage enterprise is not often associated with tango, but a few years ago, at a memorial celebration for the composer David Tudor, I learned that the situation might be more complicated than I had thought. Now, of all the composers in the pit with Cage, it was Tudor who tended most frequently to produce sounds that could empty a theater. His electronic music could be jagged, thunderous, ear-splitting. The splits were as unpredictable as lightning, highly theatrical. At the celebration, which was held at the Judson Church, Tudor's electronic armamentarium was set up right where one walked in, and early in the evening the machines produced some of the sound for which he was notorious.

Yet most of the night was devoted to quite another listening experience. It turned out, as one speaker explained, that Tudor had been an obsessive aficionado of tango music for decades, and that when he was given his druthers, he pulled the plug on the machines and sought the plaintive voice of a bandoneon. At Judson, two tango orchestras played some of the most insinuating and passionate tangos ever composed, and few people who walked into the church that evening walked out thinking the same way about Tudor's music. In the spirit of chance operations, just as the program ended, the heavens themselves opened up in a thunderstorm, with lightning so bright and thunder so loud that some of us thought the organizers must have somehow arranged the effect through technical wizardry. For the celebration of David Tudor's life and career, the very skies were pouring down tangos. ■

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The Fact Artist

By JONATHAN RABAN

Human Voices
by Penelope Fitzgerald

(Mariner Books, 144 pp., $12)

IF PENELOPE FITZGERALD has ever fossicked in the stacks of the London Library in order to research the background for her novels, there is no trace of her labors in the books themselves. She always writes as if from first-hand memory. She cannot actually have lived in Germany in 1792, in Cambridge in 1912, in Moscow in 1913. Born in 1916, Fitzgerald still appears too young to have acquired the abundant, cosmopolitan knowledge of the world that irradiates her best work. She may well have been in Florence in 1955, and she probably worked for the BBC in 1940; but whether she is treating the recent past or the distant past, in England or elsewhere, she seems able to recollect it, effortlessly, with all the random, off-center details that memory alone can usually supply.

It is instructive to see what she admires in other writers. In the current issue of the new British quarterly *Books and Company*, Fitzgerald is to be found singing the praises of *The Country of the Pointed Firs* by Sarah Orne Jewett:

> In a few pages Jewett establishes forever the substantial reality of Dunnett's landing. We know it, we have been there, we have walked up the steep streets, we know the sea air.... Jewett knew all about fishing and small-holding and cooking haddock chowder, about birds, weather, tides and clouds. She had a wonderful ear for the Maine voice, breaking the immense silences. She quotes, more than once, what her father said to her: "Don't write about things and people. Tell them just as they are," and she understood the natural history of small communities.

These are all Fitzgeraldian virtues, especially the last one. Her own understanding of "the natural history of small communities"—as if the communities were tide-pools, to be investigated with shrimp-net and magnifying glass—lies at the heart of her fiction.

She conducts her novels like scientific experiments involving a precise historical moment, a lavishly remembered physical habitat, and an ill-assorted bunch of human beings—accidental inhabitants of their place and their time. Though the outcome of each experiment is complex and often contradictory, the initial question that sets it in motion is simple. In *The Bookshop*, it is: can the widowed Florence Green make a success of running a bookstore in the sour townlet of Hardborough on the East Anglian coast in 1959? In *Offshore*, it is: will the tatterdemalion community of Londoners, living aboard their Thames barges on Battersea Reach in the early 1960s, sink or float? In *The Blue Flower*, the question seems to have been resolved before the book starts: Fritz von Hardenberg will become the poet Novalis. But one of the great pleasures of the novel is one's discovery of how very easy it would have been for Fritz not to have become Novalis.

In Fitzgerald's bracingly stoic view of the world, things could always have been otherwise. Contingency rules. The last two sentences of *The Gate of Angels* make the point:

> She must have spent five minutes in there, not much more. The slight delay, however, meant that she met Fred Fairly walking slowly back to St. Angelicus.

Those five minutes may or may not reverse the apparent outcome of the novel, which finds chaos theory in its infancy in the Cavendish Laboratory.

The tone of the novels is of a piece with their cool, experimental structure. More than any novelist I can think of, Fitzgerald aspires to a scrupulous disinterestedness as she observes the goings-on inside her books. She cherishes hard data, in the form of dialogue and facts about weather, architecture, domestic routines, professional expertise, clothing, voices. Figurative language is a rare and highly significant luxury for her. She carries spareness of description to an extreme. A paragraph by her often reads as if every other sentence had been omitted: the reader hops, oddly, from recorded fact to recorded fact, and has to work quite hard to intuit the connections between them. It is like being at a dinner party full of strangers, all of whom know each other well; you find your way by hunch and guesswork. The effect is disquietingly lifelike.

At a time when nearly all contemporary fiction assumes a comfortable solipsism as a natural condition of existence, with every novelist busy creating his or her "own" world, Fitzgerald insists, unfashionably, that *the* world is the place to write about, and that the lives of her characters continue independently of the novelist's capacity to observe or create them. This is not a modest philosophical position to occupy. It turns Fitzgerald into a radical dissenter from the literary mainstream.

In her watchful detachment from the events in her books, she is a classic ironist, in H.W. Fowler's happy definition of irony as "a form of utterance that postulates a double audience, consisting of one party that hearing shall hear and shall not understand, and another party that, when more is meant than meets the ear, is aware both of that more and of the outsiders' incomprehension." She is always requiring her readers to be that second audience; and, for those who make the exacting grade, Fitzgerald is the funniest writer in English now alive.

HER FIRST BOOK, published when she was fifty-nine, was a biography of the painter and designer Sir Edward Burne-Jones. Her second book, *The Knox Brothers* (1977), was in effect the natural history of Penelope Fitzgerald, an engrossing study of the family tide-pool in which she grew up. Her father E.V. Knox, and his brothers Dillwyn, Wilfred, and Ronald, were a daunting quartet, and (one would guess) a hard act to follow. Both of Penelope Fitzgerald's grandfathers were Anglican bishops—solid pillars of the educated English upper middle class. Her father, who wrote under the name "Evoe," was a famous humorist who became editor of *Punch* at a time when the magazine was still a British institution, the Church of England in mirthful mood. Her uncle Ronald caused a family scandal by converting to Romanism ("Poping," as it was called), and metamorphosing himself into the gorgeous figure of Monsignor Knox, who, like his close friend Evelyn Waugh, sang wittily for his supper at the great Catholic houses of the land. Her uncle Wilfred remained within the C. of E. as an Anglo-Catholic "Socialist Christian," taking vows of poverty and celibacy, and trying to reform "the church of the rich." Her uncle Dillwyn, a classicist and mathematician, became a cipher expert, a key figure in the Enigma

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JONATHAN RABAN's new book, *Passage to Juneau: A Sea and Its Meanings*, will be published by Pantheon in the fall.

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project at Bletchley during World War II.

Between them, the brothers wrote theological books, detective stories, translations of Greek poetry and the Bible, autobiographies, mathematical papers, pamphlets, feuilletons, satires, newspaper columns, comic sketches, and manuals of devotion. It was four years after the death of her father in 1971 that Penelope Fitzgerald published her Burne-Jones biography—a very late and tentative beginning to what has become a spectacular literary career.

Being born a Knox must have been a complex fate, at once deterrent and liberating. Fitzgerald's childhood and youth brought her into contact with a huge cast of English notables. Through the pages of *The Knox Brothers* passes almost everyone who was anyone: Waugh, of course, along with such disparate figures as Alan Turing and William Temple the Archbishop of Canterbury, Maynard Keynes and Ivor Novello, Lytton Strachey, Hilaire Belloc, Harold Macmillan.

She is a novelist for whom a broad knowledge of the world and its workings is as essential as it was to Thackeray or George Eliot. Her own native habitat—the London haute-bourgeoisie of the 1920s and '30s (a period, interestingly, in which she has so far not set a novel)—must have afforded extraordinary opportunities for the apprentice observer. More than that, it helps to explain the sturdy intellectual framework of her books, with their easy-going grasp of the language of philosophy and science.

Fitzgerald is the least academic of writers—far less so than, say, Iris Murdoch, whose novels can sometimes read like diverting illustrations to a knotty article in *Mind*. Fitzgerald's work is alive with the play of ideas, wielded with confident lightness, as if they were the stuff of ordinary civilized conversation. She has written engagingly of how the young Ronald and Wilfred Knox used to wrangle with their friends and brothers over cocoa in the smoking-room of the bishop's palace in Manchester, "snapping at the gaiters in a cloud of dust," as Ronald later put it. In her novels, one is always in the smoking-room, never in the lecture hall.

IT HAS TAKEN nineteen years for *Human Voices*—her fourth novel, and one of her best and funniest—to get published in the United States. The habitat is Broadcasting House on Great Portland Street, headquarters of the BBC, a temple of the arts and sciences, personally dedicated by Sir John Reith to Almighty God. (I am translating from memory Reith's grandiose Latin inscription, which runs in a frieze around the cathedral-high lobby.) The historical moment is 1940—in Britain, the darkest year of the war, when the German invasion was hourly expected. The central characters are a job-lot of PAs—program assistants, mostly young women in their teens and early twenties, drawn from all over England to work as dogsbodies for their distracted male bosses.

The animating question of the book is drawn from Fitzgerald's version of the BBC's own wartime mission statement:

> Broadcasting House was ... dedicated to the strangest project of the war, or of any war, that is, telling the truth. Without prompting, the BBC had decided that truth was more important than consolation, and, in the long run, would be more effective. And yet there was no guarantee of this. Truth ensures trust, but not victory, or even happiness.

Can an organization such as the BBC, described here as "a cross between a civil service, a powerful moral force, and an amateur theatrical company that wasn't too sure where next week's money was coming from," tell the truth? Can its individual members tell the truth to themselves or to each other? And with what consequences? So Fitzgerald sets her experiment in motion.

FOR THE NATURAL HISTORIAN of small communities, the Byzantine corporate structure of the BBC proves a glorious field of study. Somewhere on an upper floor of the building lives God Himself, the Director General, or DG, a figure so remote that he is never seen in person by the characters in the book, though one of his lieutenants, ADDG, does make a fleeting appearance. BH (Broadcasting House), a drab honeycomb of offices and studios, is divided into a multitude of independent fiefdoms, under the command of jealous departmental heads like DPP and RPD. Truth, as conceived in one chamber of the honeycomb, emerges as brazen falsehood when expounded in another chamber.

For Sam Brooks, the Recorded Programmes Director, truth resides in perfect aural fidelity. His master project, which goes under the provisional title of *Lest We Forget Our Englishry*, is to record the authentic noises of life in England before the anticipated invasion. In the company of Dr. Vogel, a German refugee and "the greatest expert in Europe on recorded atmosphere," RPD roams the countryside in the department's official black Wolseley, capturing for posterity such sounds as wheezing English lungs in the first chill of autumn, on aluminum discs, "all 78s ... coated on one side with acetate whose pungent rankness was the true smell of the BBC's war." One particular national treasure is the creaking of an ancient church door:

> "What we have been listening to—patiently, always in the hope of something else coming up—amounts to more than six hundred bands of creaking. To be accurate, some are a mixture of squeaking and creaking."
>
> "They're all from the parish church of Hither Lickington," Sam explained eagerly. "It was recommended to us by Religious Broadcasting as the top place in the Home Counties. What you're hearing is the hinges of the door and the door itself opening and shutting as the old women come in one by one with the stuff for the Harvest Festival. The quality's superb, particularly on the last fifty-three bands or so. Some of them have got more to carry, so the door has to open wider. That's when you get the squeak."
>
> "Hark, the vegetable marrow comes!" cried Dr. Vogel, his head on one side, well contented.

An American reader might suspect that Fitzgerald has gone over the top here. Having spent a good portion of the 1970s in the company of sound-fetishists from BH's radiophonic workshop, I declare the passage to be a nugget of masterly realism. Sam Brooks—childish and fanatical in his pursuit of true sound, insulated from the larger world by his "seraglio" of Junior Temporary Assistants—was and is a form of life that flourishes extravagantly in the many-chambered labyrinth of the Corporation.

HIS WHOLE EXISTENCE, though, is threatened by a directive that drifts down through the building from a higher authority, to the effect that truth is Live and not Recorded. The news is broken to him by DPP:

> "The object of the meeting was to cut down the number of recordings in news transmissions—in the interests of truth, as they said. The direct human voice must be used whenever we can manage it—if not, the public must be clearly told what they've been listening to—the programme must be announced as recorded, that is, Not Quite Fresh."

The conflict between live and recorded truth comes to the boiling-point when General Pinard visits BH to speak to England after the fall of France. Pinard, an Anglophile, and a familiar figure in horse-racing circles at Newmarket, Ascot, and Epsom, is the government's preferred alternative to the spiky and egotistical Charles de Gaulle. Talking without notes,

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on air not on disc, Pinard delivers a speech that is one of the triumphs of the novel—a paragon of comic pace and timing, beautifully judged in its effect on the reader, as Pinard moves rapidly from warm patriotic sorrow to the demand that England surrender forthwith to the Germans:

> "When the Germans arrive, and at best it will be in a few weeks, don't think of resistance, don't think of history. Nothing is so ungrateful as history. Think of yourselves, your homes and gardens which you tend so carefully, the sums of money you have saved, the children who will live to see all this pass and who will know that all governments are bad, and Hitler's perhaps not worse than any other. I tell you out of affection what France has learnt at the cost of terrible sacrifice. Give in. When you hear the tanks rolling up the streets of your quarter, be ready to give in, no matter how hard the terms. Give in when the Boche comes. Give in."
>
> A terrible fit of coughing overwhelmed the microphone.
>
> "He's overloading," said the programme engineer, in agony.

It is typical of Fitzgerald's sureness of touch that one recognizes with pleasure the small, unflagged details of the general's French-inflected English, like "quarter" for "town" or "neighborhood."

But the wireless sets of England have been silent for the duration of Pinard's broadcast, because Jeff Haggard, DPP, has pulled the plug on him, warned in advance of the drift of the speech by two words, spoken by the general on his arrival at the studio: "*Soyons réalistes.*" The truth, DPP judges, will not be served by the general's brand of realism; in 1940, England's only hope lies in the grandiose unrealism of Churchill—"the courageous drunkard whom you have made your Prime Minister," as Pinard dubs him. Silence, Fitzgerald more than once reminds us, is often truer than human voices.

THE CORPORATE DEBATE (or, rather, the collision of prejudices) about truth-telling is conducted far over the heads of the young women in RPD's seraglio whose lives occupy the foreground of the novel. It is part of Fitzgerald's experimental bent that she has always been interested in adolescents, in personalities not fully formed, such as the students in *The Blue Flower*, the young actors in *At Freddie's*, the girls Chiara and Barney in *Innocence*. Observing teenagers harden, uncertainly, into the shapes that they will assume as adults is one of the driving preoccupations of her work. So here Fitzgerald holds her magnifying glass to Lise, Vi, Della, and Annie, the pliant Junior Temporary Assistants, whose characters are in the process of being permanently molded by the BBC's peculiar war.

One girl in the seraglio, Annie Asra, the daughter of a widowed Birmingham piano-tuner, emerges as the single most important voice in this novel of voices. She is a born truth-teller. She has perfect pitch—a gift both useful and dangerous, in an institution dedicated to sound-broadcasting—and speaks in the flat adenoidal accent of Selly Oak, a Birmingham suburb. To the dialect of self-protective irony, worn like a camouflage uniform by the middle-aged men of the BBC, Annie brings a puncturing literalism. On her first assignment to a producer, she remarks amiably to him that "you talk so daft." But daft talk is the lifeblood of Fitzgerald's BBC. The whole crankish, high-minded, admirable, and absurd enterprise is kept going by a language as rich in euphemisms and evasions as Mandarin Chinese. Broadcasting House is almost next door to Looking-Glass House, and Annie Asra is a close cousin to Lewis Carroll's Alice.

She turns out to be an adroit philosopher. When Eddie Waterlow, the daft-talking producer, complains that he is undervalued and underused by the corporation, she tries to cheer him up.

> "Surely the BBC can find something for you?" she asked gently. He looked forlorn.
>
> "The BBC is doing gits bit [he is mimicking her accent]. We put out the truth, but only the contingent truth, Annie! The opposite could also be true! We are told that German pilots have been brought down in Croydon and turned out to know the way to the post-office, that Hitler has declared that he only needs three fine days to defeat Great Britain, and that there is an excellent blackberry crop and therefore it is our patriotic duty to make jam. But all this need not have been true, Annie! If the summer had not been fine, there might have been no blackberries."
>
> "Of course there mightn't," said Annie. "You're just making worries for yourself, Mr. Waterlow. There isn't anything at all that mightn't be otherwise. After all, I mightn't have . . . what I mean is, how can they find anything to broadcast that's got to be true, and couldn't be anything else?"
>
> He gestured towards the piano.
>
> "We couldn't put out music all day!"
>
> "Music and silence."

Annie's precocious grasp of the contingent nature of things, and her willingness to live in the world on the world's terms, mark her out as an alien in the

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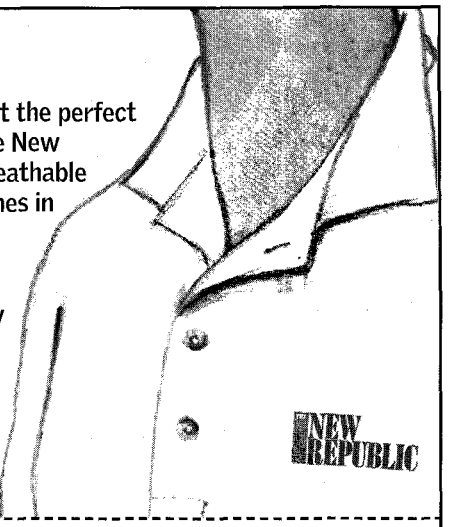

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BBC, where the idea of the necessary, and of everyone's personal necessity within the organization, are articles of superstitious faith.

When RPD throws a dinner party for his assistants at Prunier's, Annie falls suddenly and unexpectedly in love with him, for the excellent Fitzgeraldian reason that she is wearing a white dress, and so is seated by the waiter on Sam Brooks's right. Nothing is more contingent than love. Like Fritz von Hardenberg's passion for Sophie in *The Blue Flower*, Annie's ungovernable hunger for RPD is, as one might say, supremely unnecessary. Yet even in her bewitchment, Annie remains an unillusioned realist.

> Vi wanted to be of help, but it was difficult to find facts which Annie had not already faced.
>
> "He's old, Annie," she ventured at last.
>
> "He is," Annie replied calmly, "he's forty-six: I looked him up in the BBC Handbook, and it's my opinion that he's putting on weight. I daresay he wouldn't look much in bed."
>
> "But what do you expect to come of it?"
>
> "Nothing."

But Sam Brooks—self-engrossed, absent-minded, capable of tender feeling only for aluminum discs—is too weak to offer any real resistance to the force majeure of Annie's love for him. She sweeps him away. His most nearly positive response to her is to resign, with feeble gentlemanliness, from the BBC, because "I've always prided myself on this one thing, I mean that I've got a proper attitude towards my staff."

The immediate consequence of Annie's compulsive telling of the truth is the death of DPP, Jeff Haggard, the cleverest, most ironically detached character in the book. Leaving BH to rescue Sam Brooks from the avalanche of Annie Asra's passion, he is killed, contingently of course, by an unexploded parachute-bomb that he mistakes for his taxi.

THERE IS NO boiling-down of a Fitzgerald novel to its driving theme or themes. She makes life hard for critics because she works every inch of her canvas. Her minor characters are as fully realized as her major ones. She is a writer who watches over the fall of each sparrow, and she bestows on all her sparrows the gift of free will, to exercise as waywardly as they may choose. She is always reminding the reader of the ability of her characters to pursue independent lives behind the scenes, and their offstage activities are as important as the activities that are performed in public view. This gives her books an extraordinary three-dimensionality: they are virtual realities, brought into being by a novelist who combines a rational skepticism about human affairs with a view of the world more commonly held by theologians than philosophers.

In *Human Voices*, Fitzgerald has built a perfect replica of the genteel labyrinthine bureaucracy of the BBC, but this inspired freehand realist is impatient with realism for its own sake. Like Eden, her BBC is a testing ground for individual volition and its chaotic consequences. Sharing her wonder, her pity, and her high humor at the goings-on in her created world, one finds oneself adopting the point of view of an amused, highly intelligent, and supremely charitable god. Man's first disobedience, and the fruit of that forbidden tree, are Fitzgerald's true subjects, but she handles them so deftly, and with such dry wit, that the Miltonic grandeur of the enterprise is kept artfully hidden beneath the eventful, talky surface of her fiction. The experienced reader of Fitzgerald grows used to being taken suddenly aback by her underlying depth and seriousness. No wonder that a fast-growing cult is forming around her writing. ■

The Shock of the Old

By ALAN WOLFE

The Great Disruption: Human Nature and the Reconstitution of Social Order by Francis Fukuyama

(Free Press, 354 pp., $26)

THE NEAR-BANKRUPT field called modern sociology developed at the end of the nineteenth century primarily for one reason. It had not been that long ago that Western societies were agricultural in their productive base, feudal in their social and political relations, and regional in their patterns of population distribution. Their rapid industrialization and urbanization was summarized by Ferdinand Tönnies in 1887 as the passage from *gemeinschaft* to *gesellschaft*. And all sociology since then, as Robert Nisbet once remarked, has been an extended commentary on that distinction.

In Francis Fukuyama's view, we are now witnessing another great transformation. Like the previous one, this one will also be accompanied by a new science that is produced by it and seeks to explain it. But unlike sociology, or any other version of what is called—by those who think it obsolete—the Standard Social Science Model, this new science will have to take account of, if not give pride of place to, the findings of biology and the other life sciences.

Whether expressed in the vocabulary of Marx, Durkheim, or Weber, sociology posited a strong relationship between the economic changes introduced by large-scale manufacturing and the moral glue that made it possible for people to live together in communities of shared meaning. All these writers believed that such innovations as the factory system, the division of labor, and bureaucracy could not help but transform the moral rules that governed social interaction. They were divided between the pessimists, such as Marx and Weber, and the optimists, such as Durkheim; but they were united in their conviction that all social institutions—family, faith, and firm—would have to accommodate themselves to unexpected new realities.

Self-consciously following in their footsteps, Fukuyama wishes to examine the social and moral consequences of a society whose main economic activity lies in the accumulation and the dissemination of information. Daniel Bell first introduced the possibility of a new mode of production in *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* in 1973, but he was, if anything, too prescient. For Bell wrote long before we knew of such wonders as the Internet or grammar-correcting software. Now that the information revolution is really upon us, Fukuyama believes, we can begin to appreciate the ways in which it is transforming our lives.

As a commodity, information is radically different from the goods produced under the regime of industrial capitalism. Filtering up from below, it is not something that can be controlled by hierar-

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chical firms relying on extensive chains of command and formal rules—all those aspects of bureaucracy which, Weber argued, were here to stay. Prizing mental dexterity rather than physical strength, it accommodates itself to the notion of working women, thereby undermining received gender arrangements. Knowledge-based, it depends on highly educated workers who are valuable to their employers because they can use their own minds, but who also, and for the very same reason, can easily move from one job to another. Information industries need not locate themselves in cities where dense pools of potential workers can be found, but prefer suburban environments in such attractive locales as Silicon Valley or Route 128. And the attraction of those venues stems also from the fact that for people who work with this commodity, what one does after work—or after an early retirement—is as important as what one does at work.

AT FIRST GLANCE, anyone considering the moral underpinnings and the moral consequences of information as a mode of production ought to become a German pessimist, not a progressive optimist in the French style. This would not be an unreasonable reaction, argues Fukuyama. For just as Protestantism had what Weber, following Goethe, called "an elective affinity" with capitalism, the new information industries emerged at precisely the point when commentators began to call attention to the increasingly individualistic character of American social and moral life. Fukuyama believes that the rise of an information economy and the rise of radical individualism are "intimately connected." Extensive labor and capital mobility both make solidarity a forgotten concept. It does not stretch the imagination to conclude that a form of economic activity which rewards women as well as men—and which, in the cases of black women and some working-class white women, rewards them more than men—will also contribute to rising rates of divorce and out-of-wedlock childbirth. A society that encourages radically self-interested norms of behavior may find itself worried about that radically self-interested activity called crime. And wealthy societies are ones that experienced rapid decreases in fertility, in some cases falling below the rate of replacement.

Of all the symptoms of moral decay associated with emerging economic trends, none is more important, in Fukuyama's view, than increasing levels of social distrust. Trust is a form of social capital. In the same way in which industrialism generated capital that could be reinvested to produce further wealth, all societies produce forms of trust that serve important economic and social functions. Although it is notoriously difficult to measure whether social capital is being depleted, survey data indicate sharp declines in both public trust and private trust. When linked to rising rates of crime and illegitimacy, such distrust reinforces egoistic individualism. "In societies where individuals enjoy more freedom of choice than at any other time in history," Fukuyama writes, "people resent all the more the few remaining ligatures that bind them." The individualism associated with information-based industries generates new social and moral values which will eventually undermine the very conditions that made possible their rapid rise.

The net effect of all these trends Fukuyama calls the "Great Disruption." The changes in social and moral life that we have witnessed in the United States since the 1960s were so thorough, and so similar to changes that took place in societies very much like the United States, that comparisons to the industrial revolution are not far-fetched. This disruption is so unsettling that neither conservatives nor liberals can get a proper handle on it. Conservatives praise individualism in the economy but denounce it in the moral system, while liberals react in the contrary direction. Even those societies, such as Japan, whose cultures have protected them against the full brunt of the great disruption, are not immune, for "culture may in the end only delay and not avoid the Disruption's onset in Asian society."

CLEARLY WE ARE dealing here with social changes of momentous importance, not unlike the "dark, Satanic mills" whose emergence in the early part of the nineteenth century caused revolutionaries such as Marx and reactionaries such as Carlyle to lament the passing of what was once seen as a more organic world. Had Fukuyama stopped at this point, he would have written an interesting if not especially original book, another contribution to the never-ending debate over the depletion of social capital.

But he did not stop there. As if the disruption in society had to be matched in a book presuming to tell its story, Fukuyama decided to follow up his analysis of the emergence of a new mode of production by writing what amounts to a whole new book about biology and evolutionary economics. And this book contradicts the message of the first at every point.

Shifting sharply from pessimism to optimism, Fukuyama says that once we realize that "we human beings are by nature designed to create moral rules and social order for ourselves," we need no longer fear that the great disruption will, well, disrupt. Previous social thinkers—Rousseau and Hobbes are typical—rooted their understanding of human beings in theories of human nature, but they knew nothing scientific about nature. We do. There exist statements about the world "which are empirically supported by a tremendous amount of recent research coming out of the life sciences, in fields as diverse as neurophysiology, behavioral genetics, evolutionary biology, and ethology, as well as biologically informed approaches to psychology and anthropology." The findings of these sciences demonstrate that Hobbes was wrong. "Man's natural state" is not one of war, "but rather a civil society made orderly by the presence of a host of moral rules."

SOCIOLOGY, THEN, was right to stress the intimate connection between modes of production and morality. And, unlike economics, it was also right to insist on the potential for human beings to look beyond self-interest for the sake of social order. But sociology was wrong to insist that order must emerge from above, whether in religions that offered commands to be obeyed, states that promulgated laws to be followed, or bureaucracies that codified rules and procedures. The life sciences teach, instead, that order, like the information economy, emerges from below.

Knowing this, Fukuyama continues, we can predict that "culture and moral values will continue to evolve in ways that will allow people to adapt to the changing technological and economic conditions they face and that this spontaneous evolution will interact with hierarchical authority to produce 'an extended order of human cooperation.'" Indeed, Fukuyama concludes, evidence is already growing to suggest that this emerging social order is re-centering us. Rates of divorce and crime have begun to recede. The popularity of Dr. Laura Schlessinger, the success of the Million Man March, the notion that Dan Quayle was really right about Murphy Brown: this all suggests to Fukuyama that the very dramatic social changes treated in the first part of his book may already be over by the time the reader finishes the second part of the book.

Not only do the two parts of *The Great Disruption* argue contradictory themes, they do so in radically contrasting ways. The first part, which traces the extent of the Great Disruption, is empirical. Sprinkling his pages with real data dealing with fertility rates, crime, and out-of-wedlock births, Fukuyama's tone in this part of the book is nuanced and tentative. He points out, correctly, that no single cause can explain all the trends that he considers. By

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making comparisons with other parts of the world, particularly Asia, he acknowledges that there can be exceptions to generalizations made too glibly. Although he argues that Asian societies may eventually face a great disruption of their own, he warns against any notion that such changes are inevitable. Like a good social scientist, Fukuyama here is interested in testing ideas against reality to see what holds up and what does not.

THE MOMENT FUKUYAMA shifts to the life sciences, his tone transforms itself. The second part of the book avoids the presentation of empirical data; the twelve figures interspersed in this part of the text are all designed to illustrate hypothetical situations or to offer classifications rather than to report on real-world trends. The precise and carefully qualified language of Part I gives rise to vagueness and guesswork in Part II. Yet even as Fukuyama speculates, he also speaks with great certainty. No qualifications mar his assertions that human beings "by nature like to organize themselves hierarchically" or that "the quest for status is similarly built into our emotional system." Part I, ironically relying upon tentative social science findings, seems grounded in reality. Part II, citing the supposedly more certain natural sciences, is written in a spirit of faith, as if those mysteries we cannot explain now will surely be explained once we know more. Part I cautions us that the great disruption was not inevitable. Part II tells us how many human practices are inevitable. Part I seeks parsimonious explanations of complicated realities. Part II offers baroque accounts of relatively uncomplicated realities.

So which Fukuyama is right? Answering that question confuses the analysis offered by this confusing book even more. For when Fukuyama is at his best—which is when he relies on real data and looks carefully at the world that actually exists around us—he reaches a conclusion about the decline of social trust that may well be overdrawn. And when Fukuyama is at his worst, when he relies upon a literature so speculative and so inappropriate for grasping short-term changes, his conclusion—that new forms of social order are emerging—seems correct.

There is no doubt that Western societies experienced something of a disruption roughly around the middle of the 1960s. It is difficult to argue against the data that Fukuyama has assembled. There was an increase in moral individualism, a palpable sense that people could no longer be expected to accept the authority of the male breadwinner, the priest, the school principal, or the politician just because each of them asserted that their authority ought to be obeyed. No one thing caused this transformation. Certainly the birth control pill, the size of the baby boom generation, feminism, Vietnam, postwar prosperity, and secularization all played major roles. Even changes that we have yet to understand—such as the rising rate of crime during this period—seemed to work in tandem with the sense that traditional authority had lost its legitimacy. And these were not transitory events. At the end of the 1990s, we are still dealing with developments that were first noticed during the 1960s. It seems fair to predict that whatever happens to us during the next decades, we are unlikely to return to gray flannel suits and the feminine mystique.

Still, it also seems clear that, except in the sometimes fervid imagination of conservatives, these changes have not produced a society that would be unrecognizable to the average American of the 1950s. Our economy is still capitalist. Most Americans consider themselves religious. Crime went up, but now crime is going down. We may not join bowling leagues, but we do drive our kids to soccer matches. People still move to suburbia. They still work in large firms. They still give to charity. Their gadgets are more complicated but they are still gadgets. America, in a word, is a country which, for all its changes in fashion and taste, has a fairly stable underlying culture.

THUS FUKUYAMA IS wrong to characterize these transformations as "great." Indeed, he himself recognizes this when he discusses other presumably great disruptions of the past, including the shift from country to city, the early years of industrialization, and the Victorian period. If those, too, were great disruptions, then why not more: the Great Awakening, Jacksonian democracy, the Civil War, the Gilded Age, World War I, the Great Depression, World War II, McCarthyism? If we have a disruption every generation or so, then there is no reason to believe that the one between 1960 and 1990, however dramatic it may appear to those who lived through it, was any more or less severe than the others. We do not yet know how seriously we will take the rending of the social fabric that took place during those years, but we would be wise to view it, I think, as a "little disruption," as part of a continuous process of change rather than a new stage in history.

If Fukuyama is right to suggest that new forms of order are emerging, his analysis raises the question of whether we need the life sciences to explain Dr. Laura. Common sense suggests that we do not. We have always had outbursts of enthusiasm followed by periods of sobriety. After we got the Arminians who claimed that human beings had a role to play in their own redemption, we got Jonathan Edwards's piercing denunciation of their doctrine. In a similar way, after Abbie Hoffman appeared on the world-historical stage, Laura Schlessinger could not be far behind. Explaining an event such as the Million Man March in terms of human evolution is like using a telescope borrowed from a local observatory to examine earthworms. The fact that one happens to be available does not make it appropriate for the other.

THE ONE ARENA in which biology might seem to be most relevant as an explanation for what happened during the 1960s is the transformation in gender roles that emerged so sharply during that decade. Quick to spot an opportunity to apply the life sciences, Fukuyama jumps in. "Men have a biological disposition," he writes, "to be in effect more promiscuous and less discriminating than women in their search for sexual gratification." It is worth asking how this chestnut of Darwinism can help to explain the emergence of single-parent families, public manifestations of homosexuality, or rising rates of divorce.

The answer is that biology explains both too much and too little. If men are hardwired to sleep around, then there is no reason why they should form families in the first place. If biology is destiny, then the social changes associated with the Great Disruption become the norm, not the exception; and we come away with a good explanation of family decline: the biology of men made it inevitable. But such a theory actually explains nothing, or at least nothing interesting. For what we would need then to understand is the period before the 1960s, when men did a relatively good job at restraining their promiscuity for the sake of family stability.

Of course, there is always the possibility that biology is not destiny; and this, oddly, is where Fukuyama winds up. He reformulates his theory by arguing that only women's roles are "grounded in biology," while men's roles are "socially constructed." The reason for this sudden shift is that Fukuyama is more interested in why families survived than in why families fell apart. And this in turn requires a sociological explanation; for if men are to be constrained against their instincts to stay in inherently weak families, then they will need strong norms, laws, and customs. Adding more of a sociological explanation to a biological explanation only reveals how little is left for biology.

In reality, men benefit more from the nuclear family than women. Married men

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live longer, have fewer depressions, and are healthier than unmarried men. Women, contrary to the views of some feminists, also benefit from the family; but since they thought that the idealized family of the 1950s gave them a pretty bad bargain compared to men, they began agitating to transform entrenched gender roles—which means that their gender roles also came to be socially constructed rather than biologically determined. With the exception of one technological development—the birth control pill—almost every change associated with the family since the 1960s, whether inspired by the contentment of men or the unhappiness of women, had much to do with culture and little to do with biology.

Fukuyama invokes biology in his treatment of gender roles to make a moral point, not a scientific point. If something disturbs what is held to be biologically functional, he thinks, then we start flirting with trouble. If this is the case, however, then why did rates of illegitimacy and divorce start to decrease once they reached historic highs? The answer is, obviously, cultural: recognizing the difficulties facing single mothers or divorced spouses in a country which values marriage, people began to alter how they acted. Weak families, in short, can be explained by the choices made by real people living within them; but so, too, can strong families. The contribution of the life sciences to this particular aspect of the great disruption is nil.

If evolutionary science is good for anything, it is good for explaining how things change over uncountable numbers of years involving huge numbers of people. The propositions of Darwinism are spectacular generalizations. To adduce biology to explain short-term changes in a particular time and a particular place is to distort it beyond recognition. And in his own way, Fukuyama would agree. For not only does he ignore biological determinism in favor of sociology in his discussion of the family, he rarely uses biology to explain anything, despite his long and tiresome detour into the difference between the limbic system and the neo-cortex, or his examination of the literature surrounding iterated prisoner's dilemma tournaments.

Fukuyama is too sophisticated a social scientist to apply a theory as cumbersome and as global as sociobiology to shed light on questions such as whether our social capital is being depleted. It is as if he found this literature intellectually exciting, realized that it pointed in directions other than those emphasized by rational-choice theorists, and decided to offer a tour of its main points. In this sense, Fukuyama's adversion to the life sciences serves poetic purposes, not scientific ones. He finds in this literature an extended metaphor stressing the need for human cooperation.

But metaphors are not theories. They are to be judged not by their explanatory power, but by the emotions and the ideas that they stimulate. Personally, I prefer the great stories in our tradition—Odysseus at the mast, John Donne's poetry, Huck's friendship with Jim, Anna Karenina—more than stories about alpha male chimps or the tragedy of the commons. Fukuyama is entitled to prefer the latter, so long as he recognizes that they offer no more illumination than the former, and perhaps a good deal less.

There is a further reason why Fukuyama avoids actually using the theories that he appears to be advancing. For if our destiny is rooted in our genes, we have little control over the events that shape our world; and rare is the social scientist willing to be quite so stoic. Marx wanted to turn capitalism on its head. Weber, for all his emphasis on value-free social science, wrote a significant portion of the constitution of the Weimar Republic. Durkheim thought that his way of understanding society undermined the case of those French Army officers who wanted Dreyfus to be convicted of treason. And Francis Fukuyama, who teaches public policy, wants very much to ensure that the effects of the great disruption can be contained.

So when Fukuyama comes to the end of his book and addresses the question of what we can do about the great disruption, he once again ignores the very life sciences whose cause he appears to be advocating. Biological determinism inclines one to social quietism; and Fukuyama is not so inclined. "Social order will not simply be reconstituted through the decentralized interactions of individuals and communities," he writes. "It will also need to be reconstructed through public policy." We can take steps to ensure that our societies become more hospitable to children, even if women continue to work. Community policing and hiring more cops does bring the crime rate down. Social capital can be enhanced by education. Government can also get out of the way and let people find their own ways to revitalize their communities. Many of the points that Fukuyama makes in his conclusion are very much in the spirit of the data-rich analysis of trends with which his book begins: sensible, non-ideological, practical. And for that very reason, they have nothing to do with—and in most ways contradict—the review of the life sciences that precedes them.

The great classics in sociology became great because they brought together academic theory, empirical data, and political passion in such a way that each contributed to the other. Fukuyama, by contrast, separates his theory from his data, and in the process he strips his book of all passion. One of his reasons for turning to the life sciences is to get away from the doom-and-gloom scenario of conservative cultural critics. As he writes, "the Great Disruption does not represent the finale of some long-term moral decline that was made necessary by the advent of the Enlightenment, secular humanism, or any other deep historical source." As much as I agree with him, I would rather have a full-scale debate between conservatives and liberals about modernity than an attempt to circumvent politics by relying on biology.

If I say "there's a boy"

will you think *there's a boy*
or that the boy is really I—

and the rubber ball he bounces
nothing but my heart

more than his coat, his mother,
his dog—the way it bays

at the swelling moon, its light
a borrowed net, casting shadows

like fish-scales onto the field,
onto the flock of crocuses.

In them, the boy will find
a way to watch the world

change in one night.
The rest of his life,

he'll stand at the door,
lean against its frame,

listen for what comes
up the hill: evidence

of living he's never known
before: moonchips jangling

in a stranger's palm like keys
turning *not yet* into *now*.

Eliza Griswold Allen

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Give me a Bork or a Bennett with whom I can have an argument, and not a fatalistic and simplifying attempt to reduce what is most human about us—our capacity to create moral rules that tell us what we ought to do—to what is least human about us—our similarities to animal species that lack precisely this moral capacity. Fukuyama's book presents a succinct and valuable summary of what has happened to Western liberal democracies over the past thirty years. But it also makes another contribution, this one unintended. By joining the fashion for making evolutionary explanations of human behavior to the new imperial science, it demonstrates just how few clothes that particular emperor happens to be wearing. ■

Eloquent Absences

By JEFFREY HERF

The Language of Silence: West German Literature and the Holocaust by Ernestine Schlant

(Routledge, 277 pp., $20.99)

IN AN OFTEN repeated view of the way West Germans faced and failed to face the crimes of the Nazi past and the Holocaust, the novelists have been seen as among the exceptions that proved the discouraging rule. In contrast to the morally sloppy elites of business and banking, diplomacy, law, education at all levels, the military, and to a lesser degree politics and journalism, the writers (it is said) were the dissenting voices of memory. Heinrich Böll's *Billiards at Half Past Nine* and *Group Portrait with Lady*, and Günter Grass's *The Tin Drum* and *Dog Years*, along with their stories and essays, are the most exemplary works of this literary campaign for truth and for decency.

Ernestine Schlant's book is a vigorous, comprehensive, and troubling challenge to this conventional wisdom. With an abundance of close readings of works from the entire history of West German literature, she argues that West German novelists were less voices in the wilderness than reliable reflections of a broader failure of memory. She impugns them for producing a literature in which the Holocaust appears fleetingly, vaguely, and with little detail; in which fully realized Jewish characters are either absent or replaced by stereotypes; in which German writers and their German characters fail to express outrage and anguish over the Holocaust.

Schlant's work is important. It is the first and most comprehensive examination of how all of the major novelists in West Germany and then in unified Germany have dealt with the Holocaust. It is a passionate book infused with deep moral engagement. It is also a book that broaches fundamental questions about the relationship of politics to literature. And yet Schlant's readings of the texts, her explanations for the shortcomings that she describes, and her appeals for a literature in which characters feel and say what she believes they ought to feel and say, are themselves quite troubling. Reading her decent and learned book, one wonders whether the kind of literature that she would have demanded from the German writers would have sacrificed the novelist's freedom and fidelity to his or her realities to criteria of historical and emotional correctness.

Given the severity of her criticism, Schlant devotes strikingly little effort to explain why West German novelists had such difficulty writing about the Holocaust. One wishes, indeed, that she had asked why, in the aftermath of the destruction of German and European Jewry, there was any literary memory, vivid or vague, of the Jews and their extermination at all. Why should one expect of German novelists who came of age in the Nazi era and wrote in a Germany without Jews that they would be able to portray Jewish experience? Her own evidence, taken from the literature of the postwar period, supports a different hypothesis, one that she unfortunately did not pursue, which accounts for developments in the political life of the two Germanys after 1945.

In politics and literature after 1945, those Germans who did publicly raise the issue of the mass murder of European Jewry were members of a generation that had come of age in Germany before the Nazi seizure of power in 1933. They had Jewish friends, schoolmates, teachers, neighbors, professional colleagues, and fellow citizens. For non-Jewish writers such as Thomas Mann or Wolfgang Koeppen, and for non-Jewish German politicians such as Theodor Heuss, Kurt Schumacher, Ernst Reuter, and even Konrad Adenauer in the West and Paul Merker in the East, Jews in Germany were not an abstraction. They were a part of their past.

WHEN THESE WRITERS spoke about the persecution and the extermination, they did so in anger at what had been done to their friends and to their country; they spoke in guilt, in shame, and in mourning for what the country in which they were implicated had done to the Jews. Thomas Mann, himself married to a Jewish woman and in frequent contact with Jewish émigrés in the United States, expressed the outrage and the grief that Schlant finds wanting in the literature of postwar West Germany, in his novels of exile, *Doctor Faustus* and *Joseph and His Brothers*, and in his wartime anti-Nazi essays and speeches. These texts were important elements of West German intellectual and cultural life in the postwar years, but Mann understandably refused to return and to live in post-Nazi Germany.

The writers of Mann's generation who remained in postwar Germany and adapted to life under the Nazi regime offered either silence or apologetics. In 1947, the generation of writers who came of age during the Hitler years and who wanted to express their revulsion with Nazism coalesced in the "Group 47." Böll and Grass, born in 1917 and 1927 respectively, emerged as its most important members, and as the most important West German novelists of the immediate postwar decades. Too young to have lived their adulthood in a German-Jewish Germany, their knowledge of Jews was limited to witnessing the Nazi persecution of the increasingly isolated and remote objects of the national hatred.

The outsiders about whom they wrote with empathy, detail, and familiarity were people they knew: for Böll, the Catholics of Cologne and the Rhineland; for Grass, the Poles and the North German Protestants. Given that they did not have close Jewish friends or colleagues during the Nazi era, and had few chances to meet Jews in postwar West Germany, it is not surprising to learn, as Schlant observes, that they and other West German novelists of their generation did not on the

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whole write about the Holocaust or Jewish characters as vividly as they wrote about Germans.

WHERE, IT IS fair to ask, have novelists written thoughtfully about people they have not met, or have met only at a distance? In this country, there are very few white novelists who have been able to write successfully about the experience of African Americans; the greatest novels about African American life come from African American writers themselves. Literature is a heightening of local knowledge. The imagination is launched by what it knows. But the German imagination after the war did not know Jews. They did not appear in the immediate world of the writers. The Nazis smashed the bonds that existed between Germans and Jews, and left behind a Germany without Jews. For this reason, Schlant may be too unforgiving. The gaps and the omissions about the Jews in Böll's and Grass's anti-Nazi novels are not examples of moral obtuseness; they are the after-effects of the cultural isolation and the anti-Semitic persecution of the Nazi years combined with the resulting absence of Jews in postwar West German cultural life.

Schlant's literary analysis rests on a view of West German history that reproduces some partial truths of conventional wisdom. As if it were an obvious fact, she refers to "the farce of denazification trials," and writes that "few war criminals were rigorously punished." In fact, 90,000 persons were indicted by the Allies in 1945. Between 1945 and 1949, more than 6,000 of those persons were convicted and sentenced to prison for war crimes and crimes against humanity. To be sure, many terms were too short, and tens of thousands of villains were completely unpunished. Yet the scale of the postwar reckoning was larger than Schlant's off-hand comments suggest.

It is also not the case, as Schlant writes, that in the immediate postwar years "no one asked questions about what had consolidated Hitler's power or brought on the war," or about concentration camps and the millions who disappeared in them, because all the energies of a blasted Germany were focused on economic reconstruction. Certainly many millions of Germans fit such a description very well; but in addition to the Allied-controlled press that raised these issues continuously, there were journalists such as Theodor Heuss in the reviving liberal press, the editors of the left-liberal *Frankfurter Rundschau*, Eugen Kogon and Walter Dirks at *Frankfurter Hefte*, the philosopher Karl Jaspers (whose work has been recently discussed in Anson Rabinbach's excellent book *In the Shadow of Catastrophe: German Intellectuals between Apocalypse and Enlightenment*), as well as Kurt Schumacher and the postwar Social Democrats, who posed these issues during the occupation era and into the 1950s. Historical scholarship in recent years has illustrated not only the extent to which efforts succeeded in preventing a timely judicial and political reckoning with the Nazi past, but also the degree to which some West German politicians and intellectuals inaugurated a tradition of public recollection of the Nazi past and the Holocaust.

IN FACT, one of Schlant's most valuable contributions is to bring to the renewed attention of an American audience unfamiliar but very fine postwar West German authors of this older generation who did indeed write clearly and powerfully about Nazism and the Holocaust. First among them was Wolfgang Koeppen, in his trilogy *Pigeons in the Grass* (1951), *The Hothouse* (1953), and *Death in Rome* (1954). Koeppen was born in 1906 and thus, as Schlant writes, could participate "in the heady intellectual atmosphere of Berlin during the Weimar Republic" and the literary culture of modernism represented by Joyce, Faulkner, Proust, Kafka, and most importantly Mann. He chose voluntary exile in the Netherlands in 1933, but he returned to Germany for financial reasons. His trilogy, especially *Death in Rome*, comprises an indictment of the avoidance of the Nazi past in West Germany in the 1950s, and of the reinstatement of former Nazis in the postwar society and economy. It is an expression of pessimism that the Germans will ever reflect on the Nazi past, let alone mourn it.

Schlant praises Koeppen's direct and detailed portraits of Jews, and of postwar responses of former Nazis and their children to the Holocaust, and of the persistence of anti-Semitism after the war; and she notes his unredeemed pessimism regarding the Enlightenment. Yet in her understandable enthusiasm for Koeppen's work, which was a critical success and a commercial failure in the 1950s, Schlant misses an opportunity to ask why Koeppen, in contrast to Böll and Grass, was able to write directly and well about the themes that concern her. It is a failure that applies equally to her sympathetic treatment of Hermann Lenz's as yet untranslated novels, including *Neue Zeit* (*New Times*) (1975), in which Lenz, who was twenty years old in 1933, vividly recalls the experience of German soldiers on the Eastern Front and of the Nazi persecution of the Jews.

Aren't the novels of Koeppen and Lenz examples of literary traditions that preceded Nazism, were repressed by the Nazis, and re-emerged after 1945? Unlike the younger Böll and Grass, but like his contemporary Mann, Koeppen did come of age in a Germany with Jews, and so he was able to write on the basis of both a literary tradition that preceded Nazism and his acquaintance with Jewish friends and colleagues. Schlant might have made more of the contrast in generational experience between Koeppen and Lenz, on the one hand, and Böll and Grass, on the other, to complicate her interpretation of the silences and the gaps that she examines.

THE CORE OF Schlant's case consists of her critical discussion of Böll and Grass. She acknowledges Böll's ability to offer strong and subtle descriptions of postwar Germans who compulsively looked to the future and avoided facing the past, and then, in the postwar years, tried to convince themselves that they had not known about the genocide while it was taking place. Yet she takes him to task for presenting common German soldiers such as himself as being innocent of the atrocities that were committed primarily by the SS, and for lapsing into an elusiveness that promises more accountability than it delivers.

In her discussion of *Group Portrait with Lady* (1971), Schlant focuses on the limits of Böll's sympathies, which extend to Catholics, and to Jewish converts to Catholicism, more than to Jews. Moreover, she writes that in Böll's work "the extermination of an entire people is never cause for outrage.... The fact that genocide is criminal madness and therefore on quite another plane from the death of a soldier in battle is ignored." As if to undermine her own conclusion, however, Schlant presents Böll's depictions of unrepentant SS officers along with common soldiers who want to know as little as possible about the crimes taking place in their midst. Here Böll was clearly presenting a very critical picture of the Germans in Nazi Germany.

Schlant's criticism amounts to taking Böll to task for being a realist, for presenting Germans realistically, that is, as not burdened with guilt and as unaware of Jews beyond Nazi clichés. When he shows soldiers preoccupied with their immediate circumstances, she wishes that he would have his characters ask "why they are participating in genocide." But if Böll had presented them in that way, would he not be open to the criticism that he was offering his readers a rose-colored view of the Wehrmacht?

Or, in his novel *And Where Were You, Adam?* (1951), when Böll presents characters who are passive and unreflective,

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orderly and obedient, Schlant commits the fallacy of assuming that these characters are representative of Böll's own views when she interprets this to mean that "there is no hint in the novel" that the writer or his protagonists have reflected on their situation. "One suspects that even in Böll himself this passivity and sense of powerlessness is so internalized that no alternatives can be contemplated; and more important, no questions can be asked as to the ground on which the orders from above must be obeyed." Surely the opposite conclusion—that the unedifying presentation of mindless obedience was precisely Böll's intention, and was understood by his readers as a moral and political indictment—is a more plausible reading.

Schlant sees the source of Böll's postwar success not in a moral and political attack on Nazism (certainly his readership was liberal and left-leaning in postwar West Germany), but in his "overwhelming emphasis on the victims," especially Catholics, women, and Russians, but not Jews. That this was so "in a writer with an acute moral conscience shows how deeply ingrained and unconscious the prejudices against Jews were and how silently they operated." Schlant even suggests that Böll's omissions were due to "deeply ingrained and unconscious" anti-Semitism. This really is unfair. It certainly does not comport with everything else that we know about Böll as a writer and a man.

SCHLANT GIVES Günter Grass, the most politically prominent of the left-leaning West German authors, a decidedly mixed review. She admires *The Tin Drum* (1959) for its efforts to dissect the Nazi past, but she takes Grass to task for the tone of distressed irony and ridicule with which the dwarf Oskar describes the Nazis and the persecution of the Jews. She would have preferred "outrage and scorn." As evidence of this shortcoming, Schlant offers a bit of Grass's description of *Kristallnacht*:

> They, the same firemen whom I, Oskar, thought I had escaped, had visited Markus before me; dipping a brush in paint, they had written "Jewish Sow" obliquely across the window in Sütterlin script; then, perhaps disgusted with their own handwriting, they had kicked in the window with the heels of their boots, so that the epithet they had fastened on Markus could only be guessed at. Scorning the door, they had entered the shop through the broken window.

For this and other passages, she takes Grass to task for "an ingrained obtuseness and insensitivity to those who suffered and died, evident in a language where silence is veiled in verbal dexterity and a creative exuberance rooted in pre-Holocaust aesthetics." I must say that, in passages describing inhumanity and brutality such as the one above, I fail to detect obtuseness and insensitivity. It is extraordinary to level such criticism at a writer who insists, as Grass has insisted, that Auschwitz was the motivating force of his art and his politics. Readers of *The Tin Drum* had no doubt that this book was a passionate assault on all that Nazism stood for, a withering criticism of the Germans for their varying degrees of complicity, and a profound expression of empathy for the victims of Nazi persecution.

So what if Grass accomplished this feat using irony, humor, and satire? His achievement was an important part of the regeneration of German language and literature following the ugly and bellowing didacticism of the totalitarian era. Grass's political judgments, especially during the dispute over the deployment of American missiles in Western Europe in the early 1980s and German unification in 1989-90—he opposed both efforts—left a great deal to be desired; he wrongly instrumentalized the memory of Auschwitz to suit his own leftist agendas of the moment. Still, contrary to their self-perception, German writers can make political blunders. Grass's politics hardly vitiate the intense moral and historical consciousness that served as the foundation for all his novels.

IN HER DISCUSSION of Grass's description of the Jewish community in Danzig in *From the Diary of a Snail* (1972), Schlant finds a level of detail about the Jews and their persecution that seems more adequate to the extreme experience of the Jews. "It appears that Grass's personal acquaintance with some of the former Danzig Jews and with the extraordinary poet (and Holocaust survivor) Paul Celan has helped him avoid" stereotyping. But still she is not satisfied. His descriptions remain incomplete, she remarks, and belie a lack of knowledge of the particulars of Jewish persecution. They constitute a "blind spot in the author's capacity for imaginative projection. Here the language of silence illuminates a dominant aspect of perpetrator literature."

The term "perpetrator literature" has apparently become common parlance in some academic discussions. Yet it is a dangerously obfuscatory term, because it implies that German writers, because they are German, are members of a collective of perpetrators whose work is the expression of this collective mentality rather than of individual imagination. Whatever silences there may or may not be in his work, Grass—and most postwar West German intellectuals and writers—do not deserve to be lumped into the wretched and chilling category of producers of "perpetrator literature." This amounts to an accusation of collective guilt based on ethnic identity.

SCHLANT OFFERS MORE evidence of avoidance and self-exculpation in her comments on the autobiographical fiction of the 1970s, and even in the vast public outpouring of emotion in response to the 1979 broadcast of the American docudrama "Holocaust." Much of this literature, as she indicates, was a remarkably self-referential examination of Nazism, in which the Jews remained an afterthought to the battle between the generations within West Germany. Yet her discussion of the West German reaction to "Holocaust" lapses into a damned-if-they-do-and-damned-if-they-don't argument. It would seem that the intense and favorable West German reaction to the broadcast indicates that this was a society and a culture with some capacity to face the crimes of the past. Yet Schlant writes that the West Germans' "display of emotions resonated with the same sense of overly eager inauthenticity that showed in the writers' [of the 1970s] identifications as Jews, while the intense desire to vent media-generated emotions betrayed the absence of genuine insight. The Holocaust was now widely talked about but under conditions that blotted out access to the horror of the historical reality." If the West German viewing public had ignored the broadcast, however, Schlant and others surely—and correctly—would have taken this lack of interest as evidence of continuing repression, moral obtuseness, and all the rest. Speech and silence, interest and the lack of interest, cannot support the same hypothesis.

Schlant has particular praise for Hanns-Josef Ortheil, born in 1951 of a post-new-left generation, whose novels, *Schauprozesse* (1990) (*Show Trials*) and *Abschied von den Kriegsteilnehmern* (1972) (*A Farewell to the War Veterans*) are as yet not translated into English. She detects a greater willingness to treat the Holocaust explicitly, and to offer fully realized characterizations of Jews, in W.G. Sebald's *The Emigrants* (1992), which elegiacally restores individuality to the victims. But it is Peter Schneider who emerges as Schlant's hero of postwar German literature.

Of his novel *Couplings* (1996), she writes:

> in presenting Jews as individuals with

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their own voices and in showing the interaction among the friends in their moment of crisis, Schneider accomplishes a rare feat.... It has taken nearly half a century after the Holocaust for Jews to be seen—and reflected in literature—as individuals and subjects of their own actions, speakers of their own words, insistent on their own opinions.... [H]e points to the possibilities of couplings, and even of confrontational friendships, between Jews and non-Jews in the new Germany. Here is the point at which the language of silence ceases to exist.

Schneider is a splendid writer, but it is also the case that in West Berlin in the 1980s and in Berlin in the 1990s he has had the opportunity to know Jews well. This personal knowledge, based on direct experience, has a great deal to do with his ability to write about Jews in ways that Schlant finds admirable. With Schneider and the "epidemic of commemorating" in mind, she writes that "literature has begun to chart new areas. It has begun to express sorrow and mourning, and has started to acknowledge and include the Jewish presence in Germany." She could have added that Schneider's books reflect a new Germany that has become more multi-ethnic, and more engaged with the ideal of multi-ethnicity, than the West Germany of the immediate postwar era.

THE PAUCITY OF postwar West German novels with fully realized Jewish characters and detailed examinations of the Holocaust was certainly among the least significant of the tragic consequences of the Holocaust. But a consequence of the Holocaust it certainly was. West German writers who came of age in Nazi Germany, and in the early postwar years when a German-Jewish Germany had ceased to exist, were no different from writers everywhere. They wrote best about what they knew best. As the Jews had fled or been murdered, it became difficult if not impossible to write well about people of whom one had no experience. There is a real integrity to the gaps in this literature, a remorseless and admirable determination to present the Germans with their flaws and their shortcomings rather than as one would like them to be. The great fictions of postwar West German literature resonate for us because they convey a truth about the Germans in those years. If their characters spoke about the Holocaust then as we expect people to speak about the Holocaust now, who, then or now, would regard these books as serious? ■

CORRESPONDENCE

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character and principle. The other side portrays him as a self-interested egomaniac. For anyone with even the slightest knowledge of Israeli politics, this choice is a no-brainer, for if left and right in that country agree on one thing, they concur that Netanyahu is a tricky and opportunistic politician—and the May election results suggest this view is very widely shared.

Fourth, if Naveh is saying that Netanyahu acted out of character and did stand on principle when dealing with Damascus, I challenge him to explain the following: in an April television debate with Mordechai, Netanyahu said he would not "give [Syrian President Hafez al-] Assad what [then-Labor leader Ehud] Barak is willing to give Assad." To this, Mordechai retorted, "Look me in the eye, Bibi,... look me in the eye," and then dared him to repeat his words (which Netanyahu did not do). My question for Naveh: What was Mordechai doing if not signaling that Netanyahu was willing to give the store away?

Angry and amused

TO THE EDITORS:

In "Lives of the Modern Architects" (June 21), a smorgasbord of salacious facts and innuendos presented as a review of the state of architectural biography, Martin Filler digs dirt in the guise of rising above it, offering cocktail party gossip in lieu of intellectual debate.

Most disturbing is the latest of Filler's personal attacks against Brendan Gill. What should I say about the man he dismisses as a "supreme egotist"? That, in the course of his career, Gill raised tens of millions of dollars for charity; that, at the time of his death (December 27, 1997), no fewer than 50 not-for-profit arts organizations felt in his debt for the work he did for them; that he probably contributed more words to *The New Yorker* than any other writer; that scores of people have attested that he alone gave them the encouragement they needed to pursue, against great odds, their literary careers?

Or is none of this relevant? Should I limit myself to the content of the Frank Lloyd Wright biography he wrote in the mid-'80s with my assistance, whose facts and conclusions have served as a wellspring from which Filler and others have frequently drawn, all the while maligning it for its having been written for a "general audience"?

Ada Louise Huxtable once assured me that, with Gill now dead, no one would be envious of him anymore—a logical, if chilling, remark, unfortunately untrue. Whether or not Gill led a charmed life, he led a life of no complaint—for him an inviolable rule of human conduct—inadvertently giving the world the impression that nothing bothered him or got in his way; a life in which his colleague, the writer Philip Hamburger, has said he was dangerously generous in the giving to others of his time. A "supreme egotist"? Hardly.

Living well may or may not be the best revenge; to do so certainly raises the hackles of envy and enmity in men such as Filler, whose ad hominem attacks left Gill, in life, not angry, only amused.

SUSAN WOLDENBERG
East Meredith, New York

MARTIN FILLER REPLIES:

My passing mention of Brendan Gill's Wright biography, *Many Masks*—in which I find "one supreme egotist's competition with a greater one"—is harder on Wright than it is on Gill. But Gill's admirable civic-mindedness and many good works have nothing at all to do with his high self-regard, which several of his professional colleagues have attested to in print.

In no way did I malign Gill's Wright book for its having been written for a general audience, nor have I "frequently drawn" from that supposed "wellspring," which I consider fatally biased and useless as a reliable reference. My low estimation of that work was shared by the late Wright scholar Edgar Kaufmann Jr., who was the posthumous victim of a vicious reminiscence by Gill first published in *Architectural Digest* in March 1990 and shamelessly reprinted later that year in his book *A New York Life: Of Friends and Others*. That disgusting ad hominem attack—which likened Kaufmann to a spider, a lemur, and a predator and outed him as a homosexual, for good measure—displayed far more personal enmity than anything I have ever written about its author, or anyone else for that matter.

Erratum

TO THE EDITORS:

In his superb discussion of the mass media and violence, Gregg Easterbrook gives an accurate summary of my research concerning television and national homicide rates ("Watch and Learn," May 17). I only wish to state that I am an epidemiologist whose affiliation is with the University of Washington, not the University of Wisconsin.

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QUEBEC DIARIST

Zion Days

IN JUNE OF 1949, I WAS ONE OF A small group of Canadian Jewish students who left Quebec City, on a barely converted Dutch troopship, to spend a summer working on two kibbutzim in the new Jewish state. Now, some 50 years later, we were holding a reunion in the home of one group member in the Eastern Townships—a patch of glorious countryside two hours outside Montreal. In the 1930s and '40s, Jews could neither rent nor buy houses in what was then a WASP enclave. It was just one of the many barriers that had made me feel like an outsider in the country where I grew up.

MY STRONGLY ZIONIST AND JEWISH-identified parents had tried to give me a sense of positive Jewish identity by sending me to Hebrew school, where they hoped I would find a Jewish community to embrace. But it also heightened my sense of difference, depriving me of after-school time with my Christian playmates in Westmount, the predominantly non-Jewish Montreal neighborhood where I lived. So perhaps you can imagine the shock I felt when the ship arrived at the docks in Israel. The dockworkers, the porters, the policemen, the gas station attendants, and the bus drivers were all Jewish and were all speaking Hebrew. I wrote to my parents in my 19-year-old enthusiasm that, for the first time in my life, I felt I belonged.

WE SPENT THE FIRST HALF OF THE summer in Kibbutz Ein Hashofet—a kibbutz founded in part by young American Jews—and the second in Kibbutz Mazuva. We came to know an Israel of heroism, sacrifice, dedication, and optimism. Our impressions were formed primarily from our daily life working alongside and getting to know kibbutz members. Our group, whose parents were mostly successful professionals and businessmen, rose at five o'clock in the morning to work in the fields, the barns, the chicken coops, the kitchen, and the laundry—assigned, in other words, to the unskilled work necessary to run a collective farm supporting 200 or so families. As we culled eggs and shoveled chicken manure, I learned from the Sabra teacher turned chicken farmer the songs and stories of the Palmach—the young, mostly kibbutznik commandos—about the recent war for independence. I had wondered why all of the Israelis we met treated us, such a young group, so seriously. But soon I came to realize that it was because of our age, not in spite of it. Boys and girls our age had fought for and won the state.

WE IMBIBED THE ZIONIST-SOCIALIST philosophy of the kibbutz movement. In midsummer, we were taken on a trip from the north of the country to the south in the back of a kibbutz truck. We traced the history of modern Palestine under the tutelage of the impressive, formerly American kibbutz member who had been assigned to the group. Our overnight stops were at other kibbutzim—where the stories of the kibbutz movement, without which there would have been no Jewish state, were part of the evening menu.

MAZUVA GAVE US A PERSONAL GLIMPSE into the unimaginable story of the European Jews and its inextricable relation to the new state. The kibbutz, situated in the western Galilee near the Lebanese border, had been founded by young German Jews who escaped the Nazis and managed to get to Palestine despite the British mandatory government's ban on Jewish immigration. When boats carrying Jewish refugees arrived in Haifa harbor, the British prevented them from unloading—and sent them back to Europe, refugee cargo and all. Some of the men who later settled Mazuva jumped from these boats, swam to the beaches, and were jailed by the British—often for months—before gaining freedom.

THESE MEN WERE TEN TO 15 YEARS older than we were, and the comparison of their lives with our own was stunning. The kibbutz member in charge of our group told how, in August 1939, he was asleep in a Zionist summer camp near Leipzig when a counselor awakened him. The counselor said that a group was leaving that night in an attempt to cross the border and go to Turkey, where they would find a fishing boat that would, they hoped, take them illegally to Palestine. The counselor said it was OK for the boy to call his family in Leipzig—but only if he promised not to reveal the risky plan. The young man decided to make the trip. He called and spoke with his mother and sister, hearing their voices for what would be the last time. After reaching Palestine, he joined the Jewish Brigade of the British army so he could return to Europe and trace what happened to his family. He showed me his photographs of the house in southern France to which his mother and sister had escaped before the Nazi occupation; then he showed me pictures of the camp that was their final destination. At 19, my sorrow for the loss of Europe's Jewry became personal and part of my life—as did my awe of, and pride in, the survivors who built this place of refuge.

AS WE GATHERED IN THAT BEAUTIful countryside outside Montreal in June, it was clear that the kibbutz experience had affected us all in profound and permanent ways. Nearly all of us had maintained ties to Israel: some had stayed beyond the summer to study or work; some went back to Canada, only to return later with their families. One man from Toronto became a social worker as a result of the experience; when he later went back to Israel for two years, he ended up serving as acting director of an undergraduate school of social work. The group member who subsequently became a pediatric surgeon spent a year training at Hadassah Hospital, went back to treat the wounded during the 1967 war, and has been a moving spirit in Canadian Peace Now. One returned to try kibbutz life (although he eventually gave it up and became an investment banker in New York). One of the women from Winnipeg now works for a Canadian medical organization that promotes peace through continuing education programs for Israeli, Jordanian, and Palestinian physicians. Only two of us have never returned—the two who were, back in 1949, the enthusiastic Marxists. Today, one is a successful industrialist in South America, the other a writer and television commentator who is a populist champion of the free market.

IN THE END, NONE OF US SETTLED IN Israel permanently. Perhaps we were more Canadian than we realized. Perhaps it was just too far from our families in those days of travel by steamship. Or perhaps we simply lacked the courage of our emotional and ideological commitments. When you settle in Israel you are "making aliyah," which means, literally, going up. Those settlers who leave are pejoratively labeled *yordim*—"those who go down," which is to say, desert. As we left the reunion, my good friend of 50 years remarked to me, "Fifteen Canadian *yordim*!" That is who we are 50 years later: Jews so marked by our experience that we still carry some guilt for not heeding the call.

ZIPPORAH BATSHAW WISEMAN

The author is the Thomas H. Law Centennial Professor of Law at the University of Texas, Austin.

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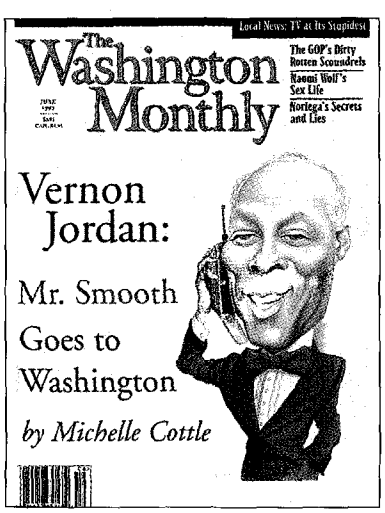
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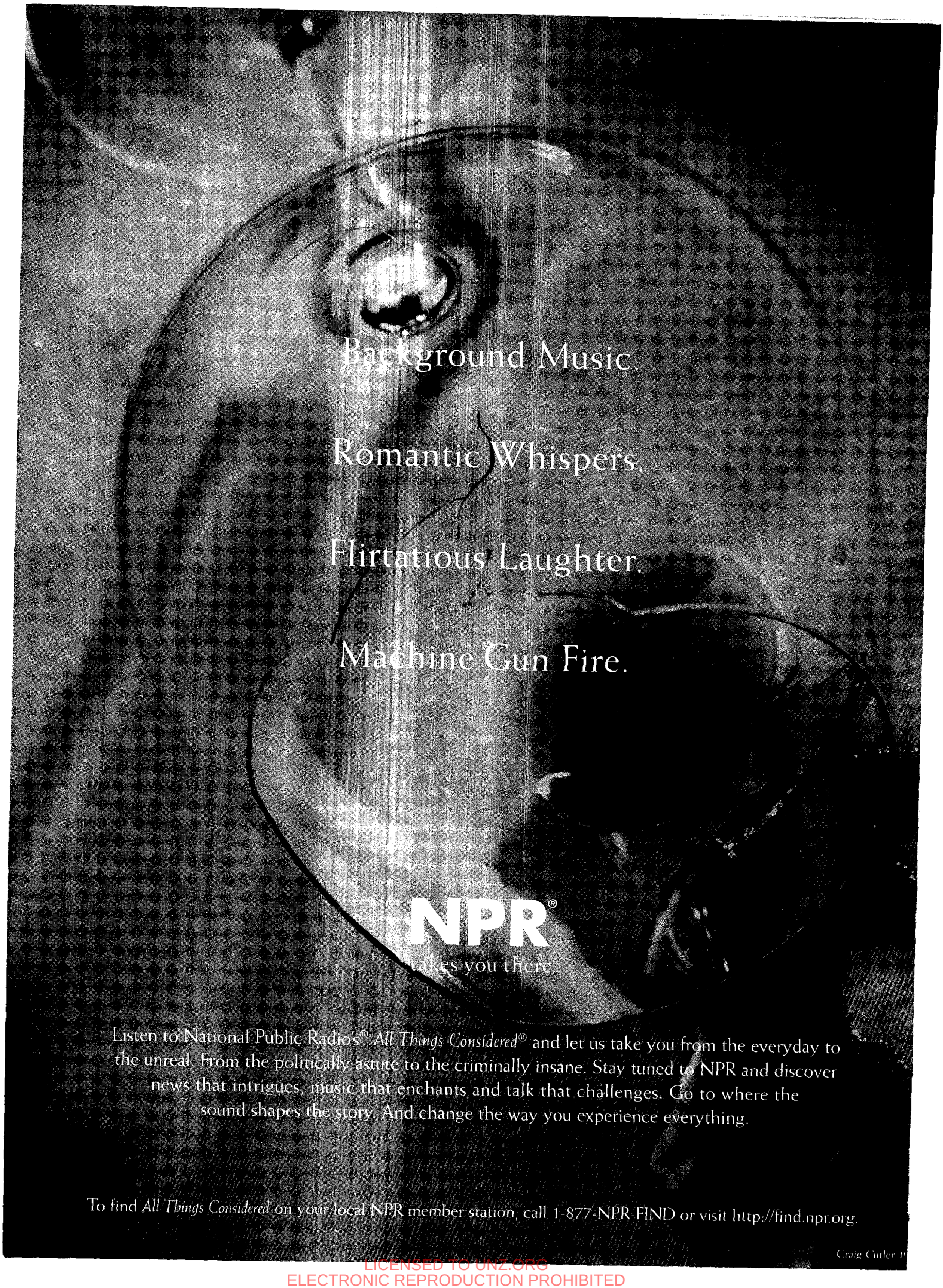

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